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TILTING AT WINDMILLS.

Emma M. Connelly.

TILTING AT WINDMILLS

A STORY

OF THE BLUE GRASS COUNTRY

BY

EMMA M. CONNELLY

The uses of genius, amidst a thousand mistakes which mediocrity never commits, are to suggest and perpetuate ideas which raise the standard of the mediocre to a nobler level. There would be far fewer good men of sense if there were no erring dreamers of genius. — *Bulwer.*

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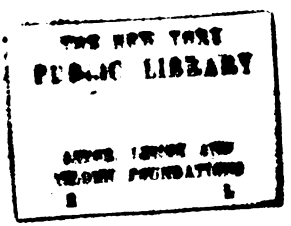
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TILTING AT WINDMILLS.

CHAPTER I.

SPECIAL PROVIDENCE.

THE house we are about to enter has a grave brown-stone physiognomy somewhat mellowed by time. Tall-browed and intellectual looking, with wide, high steps and shining windows discreetly closed to the vulgar transactions of the street, the whole expression is of eminent respectability and unpretentious comfort. The effect of the interior is much the same. The sober, serviceable upholstery, the quaint, unobtrusive decorations, and, more than all, the lavish abundance of books everywhere impart an unusual sense of intellectual peace and plenty.

Yes; this is Boston. Not exactly Beacon Street, but bordering closely upon it, and wearing somewhat of the air of ancient aristocracy distinguishing certain portions of that notable thoroughfare. Upon entering, we find at breakfast a neat, gray-haired gentleman of fine, florid countenance, absorbed in his morning paper to the extinction of the

bounties for which he has just returned thanks; a fresh-faced matron who serves the oatmeal porridge into quaint, old-fashioned dishes; a gifted son and an equally gifted daughter whom, in deference to the worthy couple, I scarcely dare tack on to the tail-end of a paragraph.

George Allerton, the gifted son, is twenty-eight. He had graduated from the public school at sixteen, and from Harvard at twenty. On Class Day evening, with the incautious expedition of youth, he had engaged himself to Amy Hobert, a pretty Cambridge girl, and the adored of some fifteen others of the class. When George, with the impressiveness of absolute conviction, declared that he could not possibly live without her, Amy cast down her eyes a moment, then lifted them suddenly with a smile that had accomplished woful havoc among the rank and file of her adorers, and sweetly murmured she didn't know, with a pensive sigh. If he was quite sure he couldn't — with a long deep gaze into his intent dark eyes — she didn't see any real reason why he should. It was a great triumph for George, of course. Yet, when Amy, accustomed to homage, "couldn't see any real reason" why the other fifteen should be restrained from dangling after her, his exclusive soul was vexed within him and his triumph lost its early bloom.

The following autumn he joined the army, and eighteen months afterward when the conquering

heroes came home, it was an empty triumph to George Allerton, for his *fiancé* was dead.

Finding it impossible to settle to counting-house work, he went abroad. He mourned "poor Amy's" loss with a grief that was sincere; but he was not the broken-hearted man he imagined himself, and when he returned, after two years of wandering, he was much improved, physically as well as intellectually.

During his three years at home he had helped his father in the counting-house, edited a literary paper which suspended in its second year, leaving its editors unpaid, and written two books, one of travels, the other a military novel, both of which kept coming home with the publisher's painful regrets tucked away among their leaves.

He is broad-chested and muscular, showing the effects of hard work at the gymnasium and in the saddle, good-humored, good-looking and considered very clever. He has dark eyes, with that intermingling of amber which imparts brilliancy and is said to betoken genius. A deep indentation in his chin relieves from severity a strong, keen, energetic caste of countenance; the countenance of a man who is not likely to dawdle at anything. The frown with which he regards the letter just handed him by the maid, denotes concentrated attention rather than perplexity or disfavor.

The gifted daughter, Bertha, is very unlike her brother. A large, serenely-smiling blonde, with all

the tender sentiment of which her type is never suspected, effectually concealed beneath a large and generous candor which seems to deny, absolutely, any subtle or delicate reservations. While the flavor of flattery may be unfamiliar to Miss Allerton, it is easy to see that she has had no experience of the perturbing influence of unfavorable criticism.

She, too, in her twenty-two years, has accomplished somewhat. She has painted a great many "studies," some of which adorn her own room, others the rooms of her friends. Not one, from the sprig of apple-blossoms decorating the top of her mother's hair-pin box, up to the study of birches in the White Mountains, has been painted in vain.

Nor have all her energies been expended on pictures. Like her brother, Bertha knows the meaning of hard work with discouraging results. She has a clearer idea of her own capabilities and limitations than most young ladies. She never begins anything without a definite idea of what she is going to do, and sufficient determination to carry her through much weary plodding.

Receiving no letter herself, Bertha looks wistfully across at her brother. But it is the mother whose curiosity gets the better of her courtesy.

"From your publishers, George?" she asks.

"My publishers, mother!" exclaims George, with a derisive laugh. "Those unfortunate beings, I

begin to fear, are as yet unborn and, unlike the poet in the classical phrase, will have to be made."

"The literary market is so over-crowded," remarked the lady plaintively. "The publishers have it all their own way. If shallow, superficial writers only knew how much wiser they would seem by keeping out of print, what an economy of time all around!"

George laughed. "When my two manuscripts get back again, I'll gracefully retire from the over-crowded course; the next best thing to having made no attempt to get in."

"George! you know you are neither shallow nor superficial," returned his mother reproachfully. "When one has talents it is wicked not to use them. After all the success you've had I shouldn't think you would lose courage because some publishers who never wrote a line themselves and are continually making mistakes, haven't the good sense to see the real merit of your work."

"Well, I'll own I thought the novel rather clever. It has one fatal fault, however; it is too original. The hero is a bachelor who interprets too literally the apostle's injunction to care for celestial rather than terrestrial approval, and lives a devoted, self-effacing, unsentimental life. He loves wisely and not too well. The publishers may fear there are not enough cultivated bachelors to buy out the edition; not daring to count on the patronage of old maids and married people."

"It must be very interesting," said his mother, with a glance of fond admiration. "Why not give them your name, George; let them know who you are?"

"That is my only consolation; they don't know! It never was my idea of bliss to be advertised and described and interviewed along with prize-fighters and horse-jockeys and patent-medicine men; and after all I feel as if I had made a sort of escape. Nothing but necessity ever drove me into the book business, the last resort of a beggarly scholar. I had just enough money to buy two reams of paper and a box of pens. No other professional outfit requires so little money."

"But your time, your precious time, George!"

"Yes; nearly a year and a half thrown away!" And George began to frown again at his letter. "Yet," brightening, "I have, at least, done no harm; and that is more than every writer can say."

George had not arrived at this state of resignation without good reason. He had not merely tapped timidly at the doors of one or two great publishing houses and then gone meekly away, but had given a majority of the first-class publishers the opportunity to flout his effusions. He had taken the hint at last: accepted his evident lack of the indestructible afflatus as nothing so incredible, after all, and, having made his best effort and failed, he had consoled himself, like the philosopher

he was, with the reflection that the grapes were probably sour.

"But you haven't told us who your letter is from," suggested his mother.

"Why, it's the oddest thing! I had almost forgotten the man and the whole circumstance, and — but I'll read you the letter, first."

It was a formal notification that the estate of Col. R. H. Pinkney, consisting of six hundred acres of land, a dwelling, and "thirty-odd outbuildings," not enumerated, was now, by will of the late owner, the property of George Allerton; with the stipulation that he was to live on it at least ten yeaas.

Notably brief for a legal document; evidently neither a labor of love nor of lucre to the executor, J. D. Ingram.

"My whole acquaintance with the man seemed of such slight importance that I never thought to mention it. His name, in fact, had almost slipped my mind."

George began to eat his mutton-chop and Graham biscuit in a hurried manner, as if he meant to take the next train.

"O, George!" cried his mother, suddenly breaking the solemn silence, "you will surely not think of going! It all sounds so improbable! It may be a decoy from some enemy."

"Yes; they are fighters down there," remarked Bertha. "History calls Kentucky the dark and

bloody ground. They grew so used to fighting the Indians in Daniel Boone's day, that they can't stop now, I suppose."

His father folded his paper carefully and placed it on the table. "Now, George, tell us all about it."

It is needless to record the whole of George's story. He had found the wounded Confederate officer by the roadside and befriended him. Too ill to care what was done with him, the rebel colonel neither accepted nor rejected his enemy's offer of help. Allerton carried him to a cabin near by, and for two days — while awaiting the answer to an important dispatch — nursed him into a sort of convalescence.

"As he grew better," he said in conclusion, "we began, cautiously, to discuss the situation, and were amazed to find how near together we were on many important points. The Colonel readily signed the parole of honor, as his taking up arms against the Union was now out of the question. He has been dead only one year" — referring to the letter. "I hardly though he could have lived so long."

"Six hundred acres of land, a manor house and thirty-odd out-buildings!" exclaimed Bertha. "Why, George, you will be quite a nabob. What in the world can they want with thirty out-buildings?"

"Negro quarters and stables. Some of the Kentucky stock farms have stables a quarter of a mile

long; and their negro cabins often form regular towns. Kentucky is one of the wealthy States. Let me see — Blank County; I should say that was one of the rich counties."

"But ten years is a long, long while," suggested Bertha.

"I remember now that he said what the North and South needed was to know each other. He thought there ought to be two continuous processions; the North going southward, the South going northward."

"You are surely not thinking of going, George?" said his mother anxiously.

"Not? As poor as I am! As anxious to take my part in the world's work instead of pottering around here, growing conceited and selfish! There's no chance to do anything here in Boston. There are ten men now, doing the work of one. And think of the freedom, the independence, the sense of importance six hundred acres of one's own soil must give one! Why, it strikes me as an actual case of special Providence!"

"But the conditions! You are bound to live there, among those blood-thirsty sharp-shooters, ten years! And that will be ten more years of war, with all the old anxieties and fears over again. And so far away! O, George! life is so short, let's try to keep together" —

"Come, mother," said the father, "we are not even as wise as the old birds who push their young ones

out into the world. We want to keep ours in the nest, even after they have grown restless and eager for flight. George may do a good work in the South. And Boston has no room for all the young men of brains and breeding that she annually turns loose on the world. You see them, year after year, at the club, criticising authors, artists, actors, every body who is doing anything. Occasionally one breaks away, and if he does not drift back in a few months, he may distinguish himself in one way or another. 'Home keeping youths,' you know, 'have ever homely wits.'"

"He might even get to be Governor of the State," suggested Bertha. "Father doesn't mean to push me out, I know," with a caressing movement towards him. "He needs me too badly to look after his own affairs, don't you, father? You couldn't get on without me, at all, could you?"

"No, daughter, no," reaching out his hand for the plump and rather large one stretched appealingly toward him. "Allerton & Coventry would soon go all to pieces without you. Have you ever seen Athens, George?"

"No; but I have seen a hundred other Southern towns just like it, I've no doubt. Straggling, shiftless, gossipy: the buildings in various stages of decomposition; the villagers interested in everybody's business except their own; keenly alive to the movements of the gentry who lived on their

country estates or on a swell street of their own, and though genial, never forget the vast distance between themselves and the 'common people.' Those who never owned a slave in their lives, and who, in their hearts, are glad of the general reduction of uncomfortable eminences, are just as indignant over the 'robbery of the slave property' as the man who lost a hundred."

"And you will be one of the gentry?" ventured Bertha, with a smile of complacence. "Really, George, I should almost like to go, too. I am as weary as you of climbing up the ever-climbing wave of useless culture here. I would even like to teach a colored school."

"All your Harvard training!" exclaimed his mother. "What use will you have for that down there?"

"Why, mother, there are bright men and women down there. There are numberless college graduates, and life is as complicated there as it is here. Louis Philippe taught French in a Kentucky college during his exile, you know, and Louis Napoleon in another, I have heard. That is rather long ago, it is true, but there may still linger on the social atmosphere faint traces of the royal fragrance."

"Think of a Bourbon teaching in an American school!" said Bertha.

"The Bourbons have seldom been better employed," returned George.

While the admiring trio continued to discuss this strange thing that had happened to their hero, he himself fell into a dreamy silence, and presently left them and went to his room. For a few moments he stood gazing into the clear wide sky, then turning into a corner shut off from the rest of the room by a tall screen, knelt down and asked for light on this strange divergence of the paths. And while the words were in his mouth there flashed through his mind a thought of the poor people for whose freedom he had fought, and he began to thank Heaven for this additional privilege of helping to free them from the more bitter bondage of ignorance.

CHAPTER II.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

AT four-thirty postmeridian, on the fifteenth day of March, 1872, George Allerton clambered down from the top of the cumbersome old stage-coach and stretched his legs as if relieved to find their activity unimpaired by long disuse. It was the end of his journey. His feet now made their first acquaintance with the soil of Athens.* It was an acquaintance destined to long and intimate continuance.

For an instant his keen glance covered the apathetic group about the tavern door who quickened into absolute interest at sight of this important looking arrival.

Allerton could not keep out of his eyes the cold disfavor that was in his mind, yet a glimpse of the sleeping tiger which lay concealed beneath that vacant cat-like gaze might have interfered somewhat with his prompt dismissal of these typical specimens of Kentucky's "poah white trash."

The impression of censure carried by his glance

* Athens is used merely as a typical name and has no reference to the town of that name in Kentucky.

sank into ready soil and rankled there like the remembrance of a blow.

"Blamed carpet-bagger!" muttered one.

"Come to buy the town, likely," sneered another.

"Hurrah for Jeff Davis!" exclaimed another, with belligerent humor.

This was the sole excitement of their stagnant existence. They lived from day to day on the expectation of the semi-weekly mail-coach.

Instinctively Allerton felt that he had made an unfavorable impression and he experienced a passing pang of regret that the first feeling between himself and these people among whom his future probably lay, should be one of antagonism.

He was the only passenger, but he was a novelty, and that sufficed. Their hungry eyes followed him as with brisk, business-like movements he secured his valise and himself carried it into the tavern.

The room he entered was a long, dingy apartment, a combination of grocery, post-office and general news-depot, where a motley assemblage of people awaited the distribution of the semi-weekly mail. What a low, sluggish current of thought must prevail in a dank, ill-odored place like this! was his thought.

The "quality" who formerly kept a "boy" for such services (if he was sixty he was still a "boy") were now reduced to the necessity of

carrying their own mail; and the condescension with which "Generals," "Judges" and other local magnificoes sat among their humbler fellow-beings, was truly amazing.

"To such mean haunts, to such inefficient fellowship," moralized Allerton, "will the gregarious instincts of man reduce him."

On his entrance, conversation was suspended for the space of a minute, and every eye was turned on him. He bowed in a general way, registered his name in the book that was shoved toward him, and requested a room and some dinner.

The sallow-faced, sarcastic-looking clerk remarked with scornful emphasis, that supper would be ready at six. As Allerton made no objections to the local nomenclature, he proceeded to take the room into consideration.

"Would you object to a room-mate?" inquired the landlord, pausing in his official duties to inspect the prospective guest.

"Yes; I should prefer a room to my myself."

"For how long?"

"I am not sure yet," casting a slow, attentive glance around the room which had resumed the hum of conversation. "A week, probably."

"S'well dislodge Crugar, then, I s'pose," said the landlord, in a ruminating tone, and heaving an unconscious sigh. "Crugar's a fine fellow, but I don't know as we are responsible f'r his support. Fine fam'ly, splendid comp'ny, an' all that; but

that hardly pays f'r his board, and we've got nothing else out of him these two yeahs."

He carefully deposited a package of letters in a big shoe on the counter and went on assorting the mail, calling the name of each individual as his portion was ready for delivery.

Seated on a keg of nails, having politely declined two chairs simultaneously offered him, Allerton listened with interest to the conversation going on around him. Instead of bewailing the day of small things that had come upon them, he found this company of "fire-eaters" engaged in pacific details of personal experiences in milking cows. A stately old General, with an eagle nose and humorous gray eyes, had been kicked by "Old Red" — who used to stand like a post for Dinah; — had the milk spilled all over his best suit, and the pitcher broken. "That kick of old Red's made me madder than any Yankee whipping I ever got," he declared. "Then, just as I picked myself up, I heard a cackle and a 'laws a massy, Mass Charles!' and there stood old Dinah herself, courtesying and trying hard to keep from showing her teeth. Before I knew it, that pitcher flew right out of my hand, and, if Dinah hadn't been a good dodger, there's no telling what might have happened. Dinah had come to hire herself and old Dan, her husband. She drove a sharp bargain; and when they came they brought a lot of grandchildren. It takes about all we can make on the

place to keep us all and pay those worthless niggahs. But we had to have somebody, and we were used to Dinah and Dan. If we don't give them a chance to make a living they'll steal it. Of course they steal any way, but not so much. They have everything pretty much their own way. Dan used to be coachman, you know. As proud a darky as ever stepped; and whatever he feels too grand to do, I have to do myself. But that is better than doing it all."

Allerton could feel the indefinable change occasioned by his presence. The two young men discussing the rival merits of their hounds, he felt sure, besprinkled their remarks with an abundance of adjectives not habitual, and he questioned if the General's remarks were entirely free from the influence of the late accession to his audience.

The clerk notified Allerton that his room was ready, and a small negro pounced on his portmanteau. When he had shuffled up a step or two, Allerton took it himself, politely requesting him to travel a little faster.

"Ain't you got no dime?" he inquired, no other excuse for a man's wishing to carry his own portmanteau occurring to him.

"What's that confounded carpet-bagger after, now?" exclaimed a corpulent, red-faced individual, Major Bumpus. He had raised and eaten pork, and made and drank whiskey, until he had the

look of one and the odor of the other. He spoke as if Allerton had been in the habit of dropping down on them at irregular intervals, and as if his doing so was a general grievance.

"Some new kind o' soap, or shoe-polish, or some humbug or other," remarked a cadaverous-looking fellow. The two a striking example of the different effects of dissipation on different constitutions: for Temperance, then, had taken but feeble hold on the town of Athens.

"Mark my word," observed a stolid old man, chewing and spitting in the corner, "he's after no good. What did he sign in your book, Decker?"

"George Allerton: Bawston."

"Maybe he's from Bawston and maybe he ain't," was the cynical reply. "Maybe his name's Allerton, and maybe it ain't. All I've got to say is, you all better look arter your pocket-books, or he'll have the insides out of 'em 'fore you know it. You-all 'member Perkins, I s'pose?"

When this stagnant individual spoke the startled village thought well to give heed; persistent silence looks so amazingly like wisdom, and stubborn ignorance wears such a striking resemblance to profound conviction!

No one denied remembrance of Perkins; a plausible Yankee sharper who had, a year or two before, relieved a few of them of their scant capital in specious speculation, and had been heard of no more.

"I remember him," said Judge Pirtle; "I remember he got nothing from me. But if he had, that shouldn't make me suspect every well-dressed stranger who happens to come along."

"This fellow's got the same calcalatin' sort o' eye," continued the oracle calmly; "a-lettin' on he don't see you, while he's figgerin' you out to a fraction. Bet this minute he knows how much each one o' you's wo'th better'n you do yo'selves."

"Wish he'd calcalate how much I'm worth," drawled a tall young fellow with wicked black eyes; "I'd like to sell out."

A laugh went round, for it was well-known that Jack Snead had little to calculate beyond a shot-gun and a well-trained pack of hounds.

"There's no harm in being quick and sharp, so long as you are honest," remarked the Judge; "I only wish I was quick and sharp myself."

"You allus wuz a Nabolitionist, Judge Pirtle," retorted the local Solon. "You allus secretly liked the blasted Yankees, though you was ashamed to own it."

"Me an Abolitionist, Uncle Stebbins! Did I want to give away my twenty-five colored citizens for nothing? If you'd all worked as hard as I did to keep them we wouldn't all be milking our cows now."

"You're mistaken this time, Uncle Stebbins," observed the eagle-nosed General; "I happen to know who he is."

All pricked up their ears.

"He's that Yankee officer Pinkney left his property to; and from all accounts a first-rate fellow."

"Oh! it's Pinkney's precious heir, is it? It allus wuz a mystery to me how such a sensible man as Col. Pinkney could be such a fool. He'd talk like Plato and advise like Solomon, and then he'd go and act like a plumb goose. He read so much stuff, or other, it sort o' addled him."

"Pinkney warn't no fool if he did do queer things," put in an old farmer. "There was allus plenty o' sense back of 'em. There's some good in this fellow he's nominated to fill his shoes, I'll warrant, or he wouldn't 'a' done it."

"He owed him his life," said Gen. Witherspoon. "Perhaps he considered that worth something. He was nearly dead when this Allerton picked him out of the ditch and carried him to a cabin, and tended him like a son, until he was out of danger. Pinkney told me all about it when he had me down there to write his will. What is a bit of land to a deed like that? The most of us would have left an enemy to die in the ditch, and considered we'd done our country a service. But, for all that," cynically, "I've no doubt he has some cranky ways. Most Boston folks have."

"Bawston folks," growled Uncle Stebbins, "ain't made out o' gole. There's fools and knaves in Bawston 'swell ez other places."

"Any way, I'm glad he got the Pinkney place

instead of that skulking fellow who claimed to be the next of kin," said Judge Pirtle. "His coming down here shows a suspension of hostility, at least. If he can stand it, I guess we can."

When Allerton returned to the room, he found it empty. Through the open door came the sound of a sweet girlish voice: "Mr. Decker! Mr. Decker! is there anything for the Ingrams?"

He glanced out, and seeing a young girl on a brown pony looking in at him, turned and echoed her call: "Mr. Decker! Mr. Decker! is there anything for the Ingrams?"

The girl could not forbear smiling, but Allerton preserved a serenely unconscious air as he handed her the two letters and a paper given him by the clerk; one of them the very letter Allerton had posted five days previous.

"Thank you," she said simply, meeting his glance with direct unshrinking gaze. Involuntarily the two smiled. Not from any unusual emotion, but from pure friendliness.

Youth reads rapidly and decides readily. Her look was one of decided approval, and Allerton felt he could count on one friend, at least, in the Ingram household.

He watched her as she rode away, wondering if she had any clew to his identity. And then he fell into a profound reverie.

"Some souls," he mused, "are born deaf and dumb. Good souls, too, who plod the whole way

in silence, not knowing why we are here, nor what the result is to be. They follow the blind movements of instinct, having no care to solve the Eternal's problem of Time."

Then, I am bound to confess, he began to congratulate himself that so little of his life had been meaningless. The stern demand of the Sphinx, Conscience — "that terrible toll-keeper along the highway of life" — for the meaning of this present section of time, had never found him unprovided with an answer.

A voice at his elbow interrupted his reverie.

"Athens is noted for its pretty girls," it said.

He looked round at the pale, restless-eyed clerk, who stood gazing pensively after the fair equestrian figure diminishing in the distance, and wondered if there was a town in the United States that was not noted for its pretty girls.

"Mr. Ingram's daughter?" he inquired.

"Yes; Portia, the youngest. Nothing like so pretty as her sister Corinne, though. Corinne is a beauty."

"Is Mr. Ingram a farmer?"

"You may call him a farmer if you like. The Ingram family is one of the most distinguished in the State. Many beautiful women and talented men; but there are only the three daughters now; Percy, the only son, was killed by the Yankees."

"In the army?"

"It was never known exactly. Percy never

gave the particulars. I think it was in single combat with some Federal officer. The doctors said they could save him, but Percy wouldn't hear of it. They'd have had to amputate one arm and both legs; and his father said life at such a disadvantage should not be forced on him against his will. And so he died. A noble fellow: mettlesome to the last! We were at college together. He averaged three fights a week, but as good as gold if you needed a friend. And the girls are just as high-minded, and not likely to forget the position they were born to, though poverty may bring them down to working for a living."

"Up to it, you mean," amended Allerton.

"A woman who works for a living," said Mr. Decker emphatically, "unsexes herself. Battling with the world hardens her, and renders her combative and dictatorial."

Allerton looked at this young man, whose ideas were so at variance with his appearance and position, and something whispered him of the subtle enemy that had overmastered the proud soul and taken possession of its vital forces — whiskey.

"Of course there are women, as well as men, too wise in their own conceit ever to grow any better," he replied. "But the genuine womanly woman invariably improves under trial. Girls are as narnow and selfish as heathen until they acquire, through sharp experience, a fellow-feeling for others."

The young man looked at him keenly for a minute. "You won't find Yankees at a premium here," he said, with a sly smile. "But I guess you'll get along. For all their cordiality they'll secretly suspect you of wanting to skin 'em. The integrity of the Southerner is a foregone conclusion, but no amount of evidence will convince some of them that a Yankee's exactly what he ought to be. I'll own I can't see that the lavish Southerner is any less sharp and close at a bargain. His boasted generosity is usually at another's expense; the most open-handed being often the most indifferent to his own obligations."

"Poor fellow!" thought Allerton; "he sees well enough for others, for himself he is stone-blind. His lights shine abroad for any thief or prowler, but within there is darkness and desolation."

CHAPTER III.

THE INGRAMS.

THE family were at tea when Portia came in with her long alpaca riding-skirt thrown over her arm. One of the letters she handed to her father, the other to her mother. "That's all," she said, dropping the papers on the side table; and her two sisters set up a wail of disappointment.

"Mine is from Mary," said Mrs. Ingram. "She is anxious to send Julia and Salina to the country, and wants to know if we'll take them, and for how much; as if we kept a boarding house!"

"Julia and Salina are welcome to come and stay as long as they like," said Mr. Ingram. "But you may tell your sister we don't take boarders."

"I don't want Julia and Salina," said Corinne, the "beauty." "They are such selfish, hateful girls."

"Oh! let them come," exclaimed Blanche, a bright-looking girl who considered herself a failure because of her red hair and freckles. "They won't stay long," and she laughed significantly.

Mr. Ingram put his letter aside without comment and went on eating his biscuit and cherry preserves. Corinne pounced upon it.

"Boston!" she exclaimed in a tone of lively interest. "May I read it, papa?"

"If you like," was the reply.

"Dear me! He'll be here to-morrow. A stunning hand! I shouldn't wonder if he turns out rather nice. And I'll be away all day at that horrid little old fishing party!"

"Have you any business with him?" inquired Blanche sarcastically.

"Not if he happens to have red hair and freckles," retorted Corinne.

"I fervently hope he will," said Blanche.

"This is a dangerous place for him if he's good-looking," said Corinne. "I give you fair warning, Blanche; if he's handsome, you'll not have the shadow of a chance, for I never could help liking a handsome man."

"You needn't trouble yourself," returned Blanche. "I don't want him. But if he's as smart as Yankees usually are, he'll not care anything about you. Boston people, as everybody knows, are above being influenced by mere good looks. It takes the more sterling qualities of heart and mind to win them."

"And you've got them, of course," rejoined Corinne, continuing her inspection of Allerton's letter with interested eyes.

"What are you thinking about, you foolish girls!" exclaimed Mrs. Ingram. "Is it likely that Col. Pinkney has left his property to a young man? And a young man would never have thought of taking all that trouble for an enemy, either. Of course he's a middle-aged man with a family."

"Is he an old married man, papa?" inquired Corinne.

"That is my impression."

Blanche laughed triumphantly. "Will you stay at home from the 'little old fishing party' now, Corinne?"

"No," said Corinne shamelessly; "if he's old and married, that alters the case."

Ten o'clock on the following morning found Allerton plodding resolutely along a dusty highway flanked on either side by rolling meadowlands, and overarched by a stupendous staring sky.

"And this is March!" he exclaimed, wiping his brow. But then, five days after, when he had occasion to brush the frost off his moustache, he exclaimed, quite as ironically, "And this is the Sunny South!"

For the Kentucky thermometer has a most wonderful extent and facility of range.

Passing through a great iron gate, he entered upon a wild, neglected looking park. In the calm, cool shade he pushed back his hat with an air of relief and dropped into a more leisurely walk.

"Nature, too, has her moods," he mused. "How kind and beneficent she seems here; how hot and dusty out on the highway!"

As he looked around on towering tree and clambering vine, his serious eyes brightened, and his grave countenance took on a more balmy expression. He felt sure that the pretty rustic seats had an intimate acquaintance with organdie muslin and golden hair.

Five years had not sufficed to clear away all the débris of the war. The ravages of axe and firebrand and horses' hoofs, were even yet visible, and the look of ill-usage and neglect about the park told its own tale.

The house, now beginning to be visible through the trees, was a vast and venerable brick building of pale fawn color, with broad veranda, wide double windows, and wings projecting on either side, imparting an air of grandeur to the façade to which it had no real claim.

There was no observatory as on so many other smart residences along the way — the fac-simile of the pilot house on a steamboat — no painted pillars, no sham ornaments tumbling off. The stern integrity of its plain walls, relieved here and there by clinging vines, attracted Allerton as strongly as insincere ornamentation would have repelled him.

A great shaggy dog came bounding to meet him, and sprang upon him with such lively demonstrations of hospitality that Allerton was com-

pelled, in defence of his clothes, to ward him off with his umbrella.

"You Jack! You Jack!" cried a thin, piping voice, and a troop of small darkies appeared from around the corner of the house.

"Does you want to see Miss C'rinne?" inquired the leader, a girl in a long, bag-like cotton garment.

"Certainly," said Allerton with a smile.

"Sh'ain't to home. She done gone a-fishin'."

"And what do you do?" with a friendly smile.

"I hunts Miss C'rinne's things," with an air of great dignity.

The bell-pull was evidently broken, so he knocked on the door. A shuffling step and a grumbling voice along the hall, and the door was thrown open by an angry-looking negress.

"Is Mr. Ingram at home?"

"No, sah, he ain't!" and she was about to shut the door, but Allerton stepped forward and pushed it open. "Do you know when he will be in?"

"No, sah!" glaring at him with fiery eyes.

"Couldn't you find out?" He was so absorbed in this fierce apparition that he did not see the girlish figure which emerged from a neighboring doorway until she stood immediately before him.

"Go back to the quarters, Aunt Hagar," she said, in a soft but peremptory voice. "Close the doah; do you heah?" and the words, though authoritative, sounded musical and kindly, because of native sweetness.

"Yes'm," as submissive as a lamb.

The room into which he was ushered had evidently been a library, but the shelves covering most of the wall were empty.

"I am Mr. Allerton, of Boston," he said, smiling at Portia, whose surprised eyes looked into his with a shade of awe. "Your father, I think, expects me to-day."

"He's out in the field," said Portia. "I'll send for him."

She was gone only a few minutes. "Mamma will be in presently," she said, drawing down the Venetian blind to shut out the sun's piercing gaze. Then she placed on the table beside him a pile of magazines. "I'm afraid you've read them all," she ventured, with a timid, deprecating air. "But we've had no new ones lately."

Allerton carefully repressed the smile that rose to his lips. Here were Harper's, Appleton's, The Atlantic — none of them less than five years old.

She hovered around a moment, her hospitable inclinations evidently restrained by native shyness and reserve, finally retreating to the farther end of the room where she subsided into a huge chair, behind a big book, only a sunny gleam of shining blonde hair remaining visible over the top.

Allerton did not read his magazines. He was in the South, vis-à-vis with a daughter of the people whom he had so recently fought; and his thoughts wandered frequently to the big chair and

the bright blonde head bent so studiously over the big book.

She looked as passive as the Sphinx: he did not know that she was quaking inly with fear of the awful standard of excellence which the cultured Bostonian is supposed to carry about with him; dreading lest some fault or mistake of hers might lead him to condemn the manners or question the hospitality of the South.

And now the Romance begins?

Come, friends, be patient. Love is no small matter in these late, complicated days, and a young Bostonian with a head full of great projects for reforming the world is not to be upset at one blow. True, he felt a dawning interest in the sunny locks and the surprised eyes with a bit of summer skies in them; but had he gone away then and never seen them again he would have experienced no bereavement.

Allerton's meditations were interrupted by the entrance of a small, delicate-looking lady whose age he could not guess. She wore a stiffly starched calico dress which swept the floor ostentatiously as she walked. A colored boy, almost extinguished in a white cotton apron, followed, carrying a waiter containing large red apples and two glasses of iced wine.

"How do you do, Mr. Allerton?" she said, shaking hands with him cordially. "I am Mrs. Ingram."

She interrupted his explanations with a smile. "We know all about it, and approve all that Col. Pinkney has done. Southern people, Mr. Allerton, know how to appreciate kindness — especially from the North. We're always ready to give credit wherever it is due. The property is only a just return. Besides, there was no one else to leave it to."

"Wasn't there?" said Allerton. "I should not accept it at another's expense, of course."

"We'll be near neighbors," she continued, "and I hope we will get on pleasantly. Tom, hand the gentleman the apples and wine. I'm sorry we have no cake to offer you."

Allerton smiled. Was it the custom here to begin to eat as soon as you enter a house? But, when he looked at the boy who handed them his smile vanished and his heart burned within him. In the heavy lower lip, the stolid eye, he saw the results of generations of cruel and tyrannous servitude. "But for the brutal treatment they have received," he thought, "that stolid countenance might be shining with generous feeling, that dull eye bright with intelligence."

But, some years later, when Allerton read Stanley's books and saw the striking similarity in his photographs of the equatorial Africans and the slaves of the South, he acquitted the master of the blame due to inherited features and traits, the slave showing such vast superiority.

"What, no wine!" exclaimed Mrs. Ingram regretfully. "Well, perhaps you are right. It is only home-made, and blackberry at that. We can't afford the comforts we used to have, of course. You see in these empty shelves one of the effects of the war. We had one of the best libraries in the State, and they took every book that had a good binding. They called it capturing them, but it was nothing but stealing! But, goodness knows, I didn't intend to say anything about that! I beg your pardon. We must forgive our enemies and forget our injuries. Perhaps our soldiers would have been just as bad if they had had a chance. My husband says they would, but I don't believe it."

"There is nothing so terrible as civil war," returned Allerton calmly, "and its horrors, of course, fall with especial force on the defeated. But it is all over now, and we must try, as you say, to forgive each other and be all the better friends."

"I told them," resumed Mrs. Ingram, "that fighting would do no good; but nobody would listen to me. We had been insulted; and Southern people, Mr. Allerton, won't stand insult. They're not so cold-blooded and calm as you Northern people. If they had been they could have held out better. You suffered some, too, I suppose; but then, you were paid for it. And your inconveniences ended with the war, while ours must go on all our lives."

Allerton looked at the empty shelves within, and the washed and broken terraces without, and held his temper down. These people had laid down their arms and promised peace — and this was only a woman! Nobody need expect reason or justice from a narrow-minded, semi-cultivated woman. When a man was so fortunate as to have it in his own household, then he ought to thank Heaven and calmly resign himself to the lack of it in the rest of the sex!"

"But that is no reason," she continued, "that we should be disagreeable and hate each other. No matter how deeply we have been injured, we must forgive and forget. I told Mr. Ingram that if you came, I for one should make the very best of you I could. And I hope you will be lenient with us, too, and overlook our poor ways. You will live here, of course?"

Mr. Allerton returned that he hoped to do so.

"We will do all we can to make it agreeable to you," she promised, "and to your family."

"I am all the family there is," he returned smilingly. "You will have to concentrate all your kindness on me, and I shall do my best to deserve it."

He saw that she looked at him more attentively, possibly measuring his merits as an impending son-in-law, he thought. But there was no change in her tone. "Would you like to go to your room now? Tom can carry your valise. After

dinner my husband will go over with you to The Oaks. That is what they call your estate."

Mr. Allerton expressed himself greatly obliged, indeed, but he had already engaged a room at the hotel until his own house should be in readiness.

"Your house is in good condition, I think. The darkies may have stolen some of the furniture before the Claxtons moved in. — A very nice family occupy part of the house. — But, of course, if you wish to get rid of them you can do so. This" — turning to the silent occupant of the big chair — "is my youngest daughter, Portia. Come, Portia, and speak to the gentleman."

Portia rose and bowed in Mr. Allerton's direction, but apparently without looking at him, then resumed her former position.

"I don't mind Portia's being rather backward so long as there's two other young ladies in the house, but I don't want her to grow up without any manners at all. The poor things haven't had the advantages I had when I was a girl; and it's very hard on them, especially Corinne. Corinne is bright and ambitious and isn't going to resign herself to anything that happens to come along. Blanche doesn't care much, as long as she has a horse to ride, and anything satisfies Portia. She hasn't a particle of ambition as far as I can see. Portia, you must talk to Mr. Allerton. Your father would be very angry if he knew you neglected a guest to pore over a book. You're not a

child any longer, and must take your part in the hospitality of the house."

Portia's eyes flashed. "I am sure Mr. Allerton doesn't care about my talking to him, mamma. He would much rather read the magazines, I know, if they are old."

"Make her talk to you, Mr. Allerton. Portia can talk if she will." And the little lady sauntered out on the piazza and soon they heard her calling out: "You Tom! You Scip! Come and pick up those chips and sticks! Look at the trash scattered around here! The lawn's a sight."

"And do you, too, think us a cruel, villainous set for having fought the South?" inquired Allerton, having drawn his chair a trifle nearer.

"It is of no consequence what I think," and the bluish eyes flashed a quick defiant glance into his. "A class who has no politics, and whose political opinion can have no weight, had better confine their attention to other matters."

"You have not been ill-advised, I see," returned Allerton approvingly, carefully quelling a rising smile. "Far be it from me to urge upon you unprofitable duties and responsibilities."

Then he began to ask about the neighbors, the schools, the churches; and some of her replies astonished, and some amused him vastly. She had observed and she had thought. She was unexpectedly conceited, and humble when he looked for pride or vanity. And as they talked, the

warmth of the sunny clime seemed to steal into his heart.

Suddenly a wild clatter and outcry caused Allerton to start forward and gaze apprehensively through the window.

"Hi there! Sick 'im, Jack! Sick 'im!" and a half-dozen long-legged chickens sped wildly past the window, with the black dog and a swarm of little darkies in hot pursuit. "There! he's got 'im! he's got 'im!" came the wild climatic yell, and then the clack and clamor slowly subsided, along with the faint squawk of the protesting victims.

"We can be sure they're fresh, at least," said Portia, with an embarrassed laugh.

"I hope there's no extra trouble on my account," said Allerton earnestly. "I must go back to the hotel to dinner."

"Oh! you must stay to dinner. Papa would feel hurt if you refused. Ah! there he is now," and she rose with a bright smile of welcome. "Papa, this is Mr. Allerton."

Mr. Ingram was a man of sixty-two or three: quiet and intense-looking, with dark blue eyes and brown hair just beginning to be improved with silver. His dress was seedy, and his expression rather world-weary. A new thought passed through Allerton's mind: the freedom of the slaves had enslaved the masters. A proud, free spirit caught and bound to the wheel when the forces of life were at ebb.

His earnest cordiality surprised Allerton, whose heart warmed towards this just man who knew that the war was over.

Portia straightened her father's tie and smoothed his rumpled hair with a caressing hand. Then she sat down beside him, and, leaning on the arm of his chair, watched the progress of their conversation.

When Allerton asked at length, "In the event of my declining the property, who would have received it?" he saw that she touched her father's arm with a warning hand.

"That I consider it best not to make known," was the reply. "But you may rest assured that that person heartily approves of your having it."

"It is not yourself?"

"O, no!"

"And I have your approval, too?"

"My most hearty approval. Pinkney's motives were never aimless nor indefinite. He had his reasons, and good ones, too. You could always depend on that."

CHAPTER IV.

THE RENCONTRE.

ALLERTON staid to dinner, which was served in lavish abundance. There were half a dozen colored waiters in long white aprons, coming and going, or standing with folded arms. He vaguely felt that he was watched by critical eyes. Once there was an audible snicker, hastily turned into a cough. He had given the broad pronunciation of laugh [larff], which in the South has the flat sound of a [as in care].

"Leave the room," said Mr. Ingram sternly. "These are not our people," he said apologetically. "Ours ran off during the war; these are from the cotton plantations of the South, and have no house-training."

After dinner they drove over to The Oaks, and the afternoon was spent in a review of his inheritance. In the waning glory of a gorgeous sunset, Allerton, having firmly declined Mr. Ingram's offer to drive him home, strolled hotelward through the lovely Pinkney pastures, feeling like

the ancestors of Rasselas; pleased with himself and all his surroundings.

He thought of his father and mother and Bertha; how pleased they would be when they came to see him in the capacious, old-fashioned red brick house, with rooms of cathedral-like dimensions, wide fireplaces and tall mantel-pieces — he would have to get a spy-glass to tell the time of day from his small French clock! — and wide veranda overrun with Virginia creeper; he would have a hammock swung there.

Yes; his lot had fallen on a fair ground.

His reverie was broken by the sounds of horses' feet, and gay voices which heralded the approach of a mounted party of four. Two of these were ladies, but Allerton saw only the one laughing, coquettish face which beamed down on him from beneath a tall, green-plumed hat, with a look of open interest. Corinne, "the beauty," he thought.

A vivacious movement of the hand, a hypocritical exclamation of vexation wholly belied by the saucy blue eyes, and there suddenly floated down upon the breeze a dainty bit of lace and cambric which settled like an exaggerated snow-flake at his feet. He suspected the movement strategetic, and the interim spent in gratifying a not unreasonable curiosity. He took up the handkerchief, and, with a polite bow toward the audacious owner, handed it to the young man who had dismounted to receive it.

As Allerton's eyes fell upon the face thus brought on a level with his own, his suave expression suddenly vanished. The change on the other's face was even more marked. His healthy color fled, and his black eyes seemed to glare at Allerton with the fierce light of sudden passion.

I said his eyes; but from a certain rigidity and lack of expression, one was evidently a useless member: possibly artificial.

Intent only on the looks of this good-looking stranger, the lady mistook the hostile flush on Allerton's face for bashfulness, and, urging her horse forward, with a gay smile and a murmur of thanks, reached down her own small hand for the handkerchief.

His disquiet subsided as he met that bright expressive glance. In another instant he was alone with his own thoughts, all unconscious of the mischief wrought by that last, utterly aimless glance.

But his fine poetic mood was gone. He frowned darkly, and bitter and cynical thoughts came into his mind. And so he was here: the only person he had ever consciously injured; the only person who hated him with reason! His sweet, pastoral visions gave way to cloudy premonitions of coming evil. He sat down on a stone and sat there half an hour, moody and dejected.

"He will poison their minds against me. He will make this place unendurable for me if he can. It will be the war over again!"

Supper was over when he reached the hotel. He sat down and ate the clammy biscuit, the fried pork and stale "apple-butter," with a mechanical indifference to his digestion that would have horrified the worthy trio at home.

Ascending to his room he was surprised to find the door wide open, a lamp burning, and a picturesque young man sitting by the window smoking. He leaned carelessly back in his chair, his heels, on a level with his head, resting on the casing of the open window. His attitude was that of a man under his own vine and fig-tree.

He started with easy insolence, and, not taking the cigar from his mouth, inquired in a supercilious tone, "Can I do anything foh you, seh?"

"I think you have make a mistake," Allerton politely returned. "This is my room."

"Indeed! That's cool. Your room!" eying him with cool impudence, and without changing his attitude.

"It is my room," insisted Allerton firmly. "Here is the number the clerk gave me, and here is my portmanteau."

"And I say it's my room," rising and taking the cigar from between his teeth. "It has been my room for the last two years; and if you don't take yo'self an' yo' valise into some other quatehs, I'll make you!"

The two eyed each other a minute in silence. The young man was tall and lithe and strong-look-

ing; and the wicked look in his steel-blue eyes assured Allerton that he would not stand on ceremony in enforcing his will.

"You are Mr. Crugar, I presume, of whom the landlord spoke," said Allerton. "If the room is yours you will have to make your complaints to him, for he gave it to me. Another room would suit me just as well if he has it."

"If culture is a real force," thought Allerton, "it has now a chance to assert its power."

Yes, his name was Crugar, he said, his hand wandering back to his pistol pocket. For an instant the steel-blue eyes searched the inscrutable black ones, then, with a baffled look, glanced aside. "Really," he said, in a more courteous tone, "this is awka'd. Decker should have told me. Wheh the deuce am I to find lodgings at this time o' night? Not anotheh room vacant in the house!"

He stood a moment with an air of perplexity; then suddenly brightened. "Well, perhaps we could get on togetheh one night, at least. One of us might occupy the smoking-lounge."

Allerton returned, in his most courteous tones, that he would be glad to accommodate Mr. Crugar, and was extremely sorry to discomfit him, but he had especially requested a room alone. And he suggested the propriety of his appealing to the landlord for redress.

Frowning darkly and twisting restively at his moustache he stood staring at Allerton as if he

had half a mind to spring upon him. But something in the quiet, high-bred determination of the young man from "Bawston" restrained him. Allerton turned to his portmanteau, and unlocking it, took out a small writing-case, making his preparations for settling down for the evening as if no one were present.

At last uttering an exclamation of discomfiture and disgust, the young man turned and left the room.

"And this is the fighting type of Kentuckian," the victor soliloquized, looking after the defeated with a smile. "A perambulating arsenal of concealed weapons, with about as much idea of real honor, or sense of responsibility, as a catamount."

Allerton sat down to his writing with a less moody brow, and as page after page slid from beneath his fingers, his face brightened, his fancy quickened.

He had made up his mind to stay. Boundless fields of usefulness seemed to stretch out before him. He would start a colored school — there was not one within twenty miles; he would reorganize the temperance society; he would establish a public library; he would throw himself, bodily and mentally, into the work of reforming and regenerating this old town and its vicinity.

His heart seemed to throw open its windows, not only to the free and friendly South, but to the proud, the prejudiced, the angry South, whom

he had fought and whipped! Yes, he was ready to forgive and forget; to magnanimously erase the whole unpleasantness from his mind. His heart beat high with expectancy.

"My own life lies behind me," he wrote. "I can now live my real self, untrammelled by the select little audience of critical friends whom I have always felt such a restraint. Gently, but firmly, I dedicate the sacred little traditions to the winds. No more truckling to superior people who carry about with them gauges for the mental altitude of every one they meet. For the first time I sniff the air of freedom."

He spoke of the kindness, the courtesy, the almost overwhelming friendliness of the Ingrams. Mr. Ingram had absolutely burdened himself with his affairs and utterly scouted the idea of compensation. Pinkney was his friend, and "wouldn't be paid for doing him a favor." He had been thinking of offering himself as preceptor to the youngest daughter, Portia, whose mind certainly was worthy deeper culture than she could otherwise ever obtain. Mr. Ingram would think he had engaged him professionally, which would give the situation a business aspect: for a Yankee's generosity is reckoned an unknown quantity here. He described the Claxtons, who were to remain his tenants, as a kindly, sensible couple, with a remarkably pretty daughter: "A crude, uncultivated product of the soil; a wild rose, with all its thorns."

He touched lightly on the fact of Mallory's presence. "He may set up a current of antagonism against me; but then, I have not wanted a cheap and easy life. I have longed for something difficult and heroic. I will endure Mallory with fortitude, as any other calamity."

"I am now a Southern citizen," he declared. "Remember, father, if you vote against the agricultural interests of the South, you vote against the interests of your affectionate son. And, mother, if you could feel the sunshine and balm of this seductive clime — at least just now — you would no longer consider life outside Boston not worth living.

"It is true we are a little shiftless and somewhat rusty, in the small sweet courtesies of life. But the sound of battle has scarcely died away, and we have not yet recovered from the furtive hand-to-mouth fashion of living forced on us by the exigencies of the war.

"And what is Bertha doing now? Driving on the mill-dam with Aunt Jerusha and the old horse with bowlders on his legs — testing the friendship of the great? Patient little martyr! Even the patriarchs had nothing like that to endure.

"How are the Crichton young ladies? It seems an age since I looked out of the car window and saw the white flutter of handkerchiefs, with keen misgivings that I was leaving all the world behind. Every thing seems so much dearer as it slips

beyond our reach! — Even Nina Crichton! and I actually experienced a faint impulse to invite her to come along, but fortunately checked myself in time.

"And Flushing; and Prince Irwin, the Grand Mogul? you must write me all about them. And do not, I pray you, fall in love with that fascinating, mysterious, and vaguely uncertain Prince. He does well enough for a friend, but as a brother-in-law I have an idea he would prove a failure."

"Mother," said Bertha, when they had finished reading the letter, "suppose George should marry one of those Southern girls — one of the Ingrams, for instance? George really isn't as unimpressible as he pretends."

"If George cared anything about marrying there are plenty of nice, cultivated girls here among his own people," said his mother quickly. "I don't believe George has a thought of marrying. He will never love another woman as he loved poor Amy. All his thoughts are now for those colored people;" and Mrs. Allerton sighed querulously. "And those ungrateful Southerners that we risked so many precious lives to keep in the Union when we would be so much better off without them, what thanks will George ever get for all he is planning to do for them? There is no telling what that dreadful Mallory may do; they are always fighting duels in the South.

Father, I think we would much better write George to come home, and let the old property go."

"And have him ship before the mast instead, or go abroad as war correspondent?" inquired Mr. Allerton. "Surely George would never be so reckless! This is really a stroke of good fortune for him. I have no doubt he will accomplish much good, besides making himself popular and beloved. He can, if he will."

"Yes, if they do not make him angry. George has a dreadful temper when once it is roused. And the yellow fever coming on, and George not used to the climate — oh! dear, dear."

On reaching home Corinne dismounted hastily, leaving the usual hospitable overtures to Blanche. "Mamma," breaking into her mother's room, "isn't he splendid?"

"Who?" inquired Mrs. Ingram coldly.

"Why, Boston, of course. The heir of The Oaks; we met him in the Pinkney pastures."

"Now, see here, Corinne! I won't have any of that nonsense. Of course, as long as he conducts himself properly, he is to be treated politely. But I shouldn't think you could ever find it possible to forget how your poor brother died."

"Mamma, he had nothing to do with it."

"He would have, if he could. He fought to kill, and cared little whom."

"I surrendered with Gen. Lee," cried Corinne willfully, turning her back on her mother's warnings. "And I'm not going to hear one word against the North."

"Oh! very well, then," said the wily mother, "go ahead; but I advise you to learn to work, and to economize and make yourself useful. You had better rub up in grammar, too; and take up your French and German again."

"I could almost do it, if he would teach me," going to the glass to take off her hat. "But, no! he would find out how stupid I am. He might teach Portia, though. I'll speak to papa. How lucky you mentioned it! And then he would come every day."

CHAPTER V.

LESSONS.

"HE'S a spry 'un, dat gen'l'man fum de No'f," remarked one field-hand to another, as Allerton passed them on his way to give Portia her first lesson. "No saunterin' 'bout him."

The plowmen were busy in the fields; the warm earth had a fragrant odor; the birds sang; the grass on the lawn shone emerald green. But the tableau on the veranda, while it added to the spectacular effect, diminished rather than increased, his pleasure in the scene.

"Is there nothing these people could do that they must be forever on the chase of amusement?" he thought, with the inherent hostility of the busy bee toward the loitering butterfly.

It was the same lively quartette he had encountered in the pastures.

"Now, isn't that too bad?" pouted Corinne. "He always comes just as I'm going away."

"You Brutus!" screamed Blanche. "Why don't you come on with those horses?"

"Lawsy, Miss Blanche! Ain't I comin' on as fas' as evah I kin?" came in cool, undismayed tones from around the corner of the house. And a sleek mulatto appeared, dragging two reluctant ponies by their bridles.

The party preserved a politely oblivious air. Blanche mounted eagerly; Corinne sprang into the saddle with sprightly grace; Brutus ostentatiously holding Mr. Mallory's bridle, was saying: "You hasn't anything like a quatah to spa'e this mawin, has yo', Connle? Thanky, Connle! Thanky, seh!" —bowing his bare head obsequiously— "I allus said you's a raal gen'l'man. I allus" —

But away went the gay cavalcade, clattering down the avenue, and his peroration came to an untimely end.

"Clickety click, clickety click," the mulatto bent his supple body forward with his head to one side, in an attitude of mock servility. "Dah yo' goes! And who's gwine to hoe de cawn, an' cook de dinneh, and airn de libbin?" (Theatrical pause.) "Niggah!" (Second pause.) "Niggah free?" appealing to an imaginary audience in the tree-tops. "Yas; free's de mule wot plows all day in de cawn. Free's de ox wot haul all de wood, an' git a little hay at night. Free's de hoss" —

A subdued chorus of titters from the inevitable swarm of juveniles, who had crept up behind, interrupted this flow of eloquence, transforming the submissive attitude into the aggressive.

"Hi, dah, yo little scalawags!" snatching up a long, lithe twig. "Ain't yo' got no sort o' manahs to be interruptin' a gen'l'man's speech? I'll teach yo!" And the keen switch began to play among the bare legs, evoking a chorus of yells.

"You Brutus!" came a soft peremptory voice from the library window. "I won't have that! It's too bad, the way you treat those poor children."

"Lawsy, Miss Po'tia, dey can't feel dat little switchin', dey's such ha'dened little sennehs! Dem's awful chillun, sho's you bawn, Miss Po'tia, dey's jes' a-spilen fo' a little 'sciplin'."

"If I ever see you at that again, Brutus, I'll speak to papa."

"Lawsy, Miss Po'tia, I ain't a-hurtin' of 'em," in a tone of aggrieved surprise.

"Well, go back to the quarters, where you belong — the last one of you. You know you're not allowed in the front yard."

"Miss Po'tia! Miss Po'tia!" in a loud whisper, "dat gen'l'man f'um de No'f, he's at de doah!" Of which Brutus had been aware from the first; all his eloquence and high-handed authority emanating from a desire to impress the "gen'l'man from de No'f" with an idea of his importance.

"Your Aunt Hagar doesn't seem to approve of me," said Allerton, as he followed Portia into the library. "When I asked for you, just now, she shut the door in my face."

"Oh! she always does that, unless she knows the person; and then," she added, laughing, "she asks him for a quarter. Sometimes she locks the door while she goes to see if he is to be received. She says, 'How do I know he won't steal something?' We never let her go to the door, if we can help it. She came from a Mississippi plantation, and begged papa to take her. She was so old and useless he couldn't turn her away. She gets awful mad if any one doubts her being a hundred. 'If the truth was known,' she says, 'I'm more'n a hundred'!"

As Portia imparted these items from Aunt Hagar's biography, she wheeled two chairs near the open window and placed on the stand some well-worn schoolbooks. Allerton took up the books, and the lessons began.

But first he must teach her how to study.

"It is useless to try to grasp everything," he said. "The main thing is, to obtain, accurately, the relations between the world of thought and the material world. To determine this we must first acquire an accurate idea of material things."

He turned over the books, one by one. Astronomy? Ah! human thought had conquered the immeasurable distances and discovered not only the habitual movements, but the physical constituents of the stars. Geology? Here, searching among the débris of the Past, men had found how the Creator began with elementary things, and

slowly prepared this world as the dwelling place, the battle-ground, of immortal souls.

He was conscious that she watched him with keen attention to his words, as if measuring him by some unconscious standard, such as children sometimes seem to have. Through the window he witnessed the return of the equestrian party, and soon there entered the room a figure in pale blue lawn, with light brown hair, large, dreamy blue eyes, and a complexion that was absolutely flawless. She looked at him with a still smile, begged pardon for intruding, and asked permission to speak to Portia.

"Have you met my sister Corinne, Mr. Allerton?" said Portia.

"Not until now." And expressions of mutual satisfaction were interchanged.

"Portia, Mr. Mallory wants you to come and be his partner in a game of croquet."

"Corinne!" exclaimed Portia sternly, "you know that isn't so!"

Corinne glanced at Mr. Allerton and laughed. "Did you ever see such a girl? Well, if you can't believe me I can easily furnish proof."

She left the room, and in a few minutes Allerton stood face to face with the "only man he had ever consciously injured." Mr. Mallory bowed carelessly, casting a brief glance at the person to whom he was introduced, thereafter appearing wholly unconscious of his presence.

Neither glanced at the other again, but the same thought, the same scene, was in the minds of both: A hot August day near its close; the crash of battle slowly dying; an old planter and a boy of twelve, carrying into the house near by, a soldier in blue, who had dropped out of the ranks exhausted.

"Where am I?" he asks, opening his eyes as they place him on the bed.

A strange young man is examining his wounds, which are slight. "In the house of a Southern planter," he said.

"Aren't you a Confederate officer?" the soldier in blue asked.

"Yes; a Colonel in Gen. Bragg's Division."

The two looked at each other intently for an instant. "It is very kind of you to dress the wounds of an enemy," said he of the blue.

"It is no more than you would have done were I in your place," replied the Southerner confidently. And then, being young and confiding, he went on to tell how early that morning, he had run over to bring his uncle a letter from Gen. Bragg, assuring him of their protection, and upon starting back found himself cut off from his command. But as soon as it was dark he'd show them a trick or two!

The wounded arm was soon dressed, and the Federal soldier, declining further hospitality, with many expressions of gratitude, set out for the

bivouac fires of his friends gleaming through the deepening twilight along the hillside near by.

In less than an hour the old planter's house was surrounded, plundered and fired by Federalists, and the young Confederate colonel, after a desperate struggle in which one of his eyes was put out, was arrested and brought before the Federal general. He passed close by the soldier whose arm he had bandaged an hour ago, and said to him with a look of mingled rage and scorn, "I'll settle with you for this, you Yankee dog."

The pale cheek of the Puritan flushed darkly, but he made no reply.

That was the end of the ambitious young officer's military career. He was sent to the hospital, and from thence to prison, where he remained until the close of the war. And now the two met again, and were liable to frequent unexpected and painful collisions.

"Won't you come, too, Mr. Allerton?" said Corinne sweetly.

But Allerton, expressing deep regret — more than he felt, I fear — said that urgent duties forced him to forego that pleasure for the present.

Portia used less ceremony in her refusal. She "hated croquet; it was a stupid, senseless game!"

"That is your sweet and amiable Portia, Mr. Mallory," said Corinne, with an air of triumph. "You thought it all my mean envy of my angelic sister."

"I don't think I ever accused Miss Portia of amiability," said Mallory, with a smile. "And I see no reason yet to deny the sweetness."

An uneasy flush testified to Portia's susceptibility to flattery; but that did not serve to alter her determination.

Half an hour later Corinne joined her sister in the library, and sitting down opposite her, said, "You needn't look so glum, Portia; I didn't mean to drive him away."

"Glum!" exclaimed Portia, looking up from her drawing. "I don't know what you mean. We were quite through. There was no occasion for his staying any longer."

Suddenly Corinne seized her sister's hand and stared hard at her finger-nails.

"What is the matter with you?" said Portia.

"I was awfully scared," and she sat down, fanning herself. "You didn't know it, of course, but Boston people judge you entirely by your finger-nails!"

"I always clean my finger-nails," indignantly. "You know that, very well."

"That's nothing!" scornfully. "Everybody does that. It's the trimming and the polishing, and all that everybody doesn't do, that counts. Hasn't he beautiful eyes? And that dimple in his chin is just killing! Isn't he nice? I didn't think a Yankee could be so nice."

Portia was wholly absorbed in her drawing.

"Is he entertaining, Portia?" sitting down and fixing her eyes absently on Portia's pencil. "Do you like him?"

"I like him well enough," said Portia, in cool, impartial tones.

"If I was going to draw, I'd draw people. The finest picture in the world is a really handsome man. Don't you think so, Portia?"

"No."

"Now, Portia, I asked you for the truth. Well, what do you think finer?"

"I think," Portia returned, slowly and thoughtfully, "that Jack, with his black nose on my lap, is much finer?"

"Portia," laughed Corinne, "what a queer creature you are! I shouldn't wonder if you really think that."

She watched her sister laboriously fashion the wheel of a mill, and heaved a sigh of relief when, at last, it came out a perfect model of roundness. "Wouldn' it be funny," she continued, "if this Yankee were to fall in love with you, Portia, and you with him? Wouldn't mamma be mad?"

Corinne had forgotten she had said the suggested condition of things would be "funny," and stared when Portia, after a prolonged silence, testified to its ludicrousness by a soft gurgle of laughter. "Well," she said sharply, "what are you laughing at?"

"Didn't you say it would be funny? You said

a truth, then, without knowing it. He would be much madder at himself than mamma would be."

"What do you know about him?" said Corinne in a vexed tone, "or about any man? You've scarcely seen one."

She went to the window and looked out.

"Perhaps you are right, though I don't know how you could know. He would take it seriously. It takes these broad-shouldered, serious fellows to make muffs of themselves when they fall in love. The smarter the man the greater the spectacle he makes of himself. He isn't so afraid of his dignity as the man who hasn't any to spare. But, honestly, now, Portia, what do you think of him?"

"How should I know! I think he's well enough; but he may turn out altogether different from what we expect. You can't tell so soon!"

"Pooh!" exclaimed Corinne, turning away from the window. "You heard papa say that. Well, then, you wouldn't care if I flirted with him a little, would you?"

"As far as I am concerned, it is nothing to me. He doesn't belong to me; but I hope you won't treat him so cruelly, Corinne, and he a stranger, so far away from home."

Corinne smiled gracious acknowledgment of this unconscious testimony to the dangerous character of her charms: as if she considered it a thing to justify a reasonable amount of pride.

"Do you think he's poor, Portia?" and she

smoothed caressingly the lace on her sleeve. "I hope he isn't poor."

"I don't know. I've never thought anything about it. He must be poor, of course, or he wouldn't be giving lessons."

"Well, yes, it's likely he's poor," gazing meditatively at the ceiling. "They are so crowded up North the most of them must be hard pushed to live at all. At any rate, he is a gentleman. Do you not think so?"

"Yes," said Portia, frowning at her mill and biting the top of her pencil. "He's a gentleman and my teacher; that's all I know about him or care to know."

The lessons had been going on three weeks. He was no longer treated with ceremony by the family, hence he ventured one morning to deprive "Aunt Hagar" of the malicious pleasure of flouting him at the front door. He seated himself in the library at the usual hour without the preliminary knocking at the door. But the next instant he deeply repented the omission.

"Blanche," said Corinne's voice, in the next room, "that's my lace. It's real Mechlin. Mamma just gave it to me, the other day."

"This lace? You're sadly mistaken. Mamma gave it to me ages ago. And it's Mirecourt, not Mechlin."

"Mirecourt!" laughed Corinne. "But it's mine, Mirecourt or Mechlin, and I intend to have it."

"We'll see about that," cried Blanche indignantly. "Mamma! mamma! didn't you give me this lace?"

"How can I remember which I gave it to? Perhaps I did give it to both. It's Mechlin, though; and as it is the kind Corinne wants, give it to her, Blanche, and I'll get you some more."

"O, yes! of course Corinne must have it — or anything else she happens to want. There! take it, if it gives you any pleasure to have what doesn't belong to you."

"Really, mamma," put in Portia's voice, "you did give it to Blanche. I remember it very well. I hope you're not going to take it, Corinne?"

"Take it!" exclaimed Blanche scornfully. "Of course she will, or anything else she can get. I think it's too bad the way mamma treats me."

"Children, I really believe you'll be glad when I'm dead and gone. I can do nothing to please you."

"Oh! well, mamma," said Blanche, in a half-impatient, half-penitent tone, "I can do without the lace, of course; but Corinne is so provoking."

"No, you shall have it, Blanche, just as soon as I get time to overhaul the cedar chests."

"Now, mamma, you know you haven't another speck of lace, and I'm not obliged to have it."

"There's a good child! You'd be a real comfort to me if it wasn't for your hasty temper, Blanche. I believe the lace was yours," lowering

her tone, "but you know Corinne can't get over things quickly like you."

"Mamma," said Portia's voice, "I don't wonder that Corinne is so hateful. You humor her, and excuse every fault. I don't intend to give up to her. Blanche really needed that lace, and Corinne has more now than she can use. Here, Blanche, you can have mine. I don't need it, and it is nearly as nice as the other."

"Oh! much nicer. Thank you, Portia. That's real good of you." And the next instant Blanche was calling blithely to Corinne to come and admire her lace.

"I don't wonder Corinne imposes on you, Blanche," said Portia irritably. "You're no better than mamma. Both of you invite imposition and encourage greedy selfishness." And Portia marched off to the library.

She looked so startled and mortified when she saw Allerton that he hastened to explain how he came to be there, adding: "I am very sorry, but I couldn't help overhearing your argument about the lace. Weren't you a little hard on your mamma? All of us are not capable of being just."

"I don't see why. Corinne and mamma make me so angry sometimes! But perhaps it isn't entirely their fault."

"Then isn't it better to shield the defects of our friends rather than show them up more glaringly?" suggested Allerton, very gently.

"Perhaps it is," Portia admitted, dropping her eyes, "especially when we are so full of faults ourselves, and so blind to them."

Her ready acceptance of his criticism, and her genuine eagerness to improve, unconsciously lured Allerton into this mentor-like attitude. Especially as she seemed to consider him only in the light of a rare chance for improvement.

He wondered a little over her calm unembarrassed attitude. Perhaps the fact of his making traffic of his attainments lowered him to a mechanical value in her eyes; and he smiled, for the idea that these lessons were a matter of charity had probably occurred to no one but himself.

The two mornings a week allotted to Portia's enlightenment were consumed in eager research into the substance and condition of things seen and unseen. The door of the heavens was unlocked, and, beneath that unutterable calm, overhead, she beheld the awful onward whirl through space, of a sea of worlds.

She heard, too, "the still small voice from the bowels of the earth" telling of the Wisdom and Patience which planned and builded this wondrous habitation of man, and when all was ready, spread the green carpet and brought forth the beautiful blossoms to minister to that sense of beauty which distinguishes him from all the lower creatures.

This unexpected widening of her horizon did not discourage Portia. The farther and deeper

her vision pierced the greater grew her thirst to see and know. Her text-books were all too small and brief. She read eagerly whatever larger works he was able to furnish her. She absorbed and developed with surprising rapidity. The fires were alight within; they glowed with a steadily increasing flame.

Allerton saw this rapid mental growth with deep satisfaction. He was glad that he could be of use to this young girl who, though ignorant, was capable not only of learning, but of thought; and who accepted his opinion as authority, and made his precepts her guide. He began to feel almost as much responsibility for her faults of character as for her intellectual short-comings.

She seemed entirely unlike other girls of sixteen — sensible, studious, unemotional — a sort of Hypatia from whom he need fear no silly sentimentalisms. His service of kindness came to be his chief pleasure.

CHAPTER VI.

MENTOR.

CAN there be intangible means of intercommunion between adjacent human beings which are yet undiscovered? Had some subtle invisible force been at work between Allerton and his pupil as they sat together in the old library, as isolated, for the time being, as the two in the Garden of Eden?

Perhaps this idea of Eden suggested itself to the harmless house-snake who stretched himself up to the window and calmly surveyed the scene, else why should the luckless adventurer have advanced upon so inoffensive a party? When Portia's glance fell upon the long, sleek reptile stretched out in undulating folds at her very feet, she emitted a shriek and instinctively sprang to Allerton for protection, clinging to his chair as to an ark of safety.

Allerton instinctively sprang for a weapon, and was about to dispatch the reptile when Portia cried out: "Oh! don't kill the poor thing. It's no fault of his that he's a snake. It's one of God's creatures; let it live!"

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The conversation was cut short by the entrance of Corinne. It had come to be the regular thing for Corinne to drop in at the close of the lesson. Allerton was only human with a very human relish for appreciation, and he accepted her friendliness with pleasure as the harmless ebullition of an unusually social nature.

Farther on he caught glimpses of an insatiable vanity, to which incense of some sort was a necessity. She preferred the society of men; not because she cared for them particularly, but because she craved the flattery of their admiration, telling her of her beauty and its power.

Corinne had never heard of M. Comte, nor of his philosophy; but his theory, that women ought to be goddesses, and thus furnish men with living objects of worship, defined her position exactly. They differed, doubtless, as to ways and means, but the end was the same.

As summer advanced Allerton began to feel the attractions of that bowery veranda, where the three young ladies of the House of Ingram were usually to be found; where a warm welcome and a cool breeze always awaited him.

One morning in the midst of a sprightly conversation he was startled by the sudden exclamation from Corinne, "There are those idiots!"

Finding no explanation in her saint-like expression of countenance, he glanced down the avenue and discovered three young men cantering gayly

up the drive. "I told the lunatics not to come until eleven, and here it isn't half-past ten yet!"

"Why do you let them come at all if their visits are so distasteful?" Allerton inquired curiously.

"I can't help it," declared the beauty, and then gave him a glimpse into the mysterious workings of a coquette's heart. "When I see a fellow staring at me as if an angel had dawned on his vision, it is as impossible for me to keep from encouraging his hallucination, as it is to stop breathing. And if he is simpleton enough to be taken in by it — well, so much the worse for him." And she rose with an enchanting air of pleased surprise, to welcome the unwelcome guests.

Corinne was lovely to behold, but Portia's unselfish devotion to her father was more lovely.

"Do you know of another girl," he wrote to Bertha, "who would be content to wear her sister's old clothes, to spare her father the expense of new ones? Many might do so from a stern sense of duty, but would they find happiness in the sacrifice? And he is worthy. In his daily life I see that same Light which 'darkness comprehended not' nineteen hundred years ago. Only Portia fully understands what a good father he is. And I doubt if any of the servants realize what an indulgent master they have.

"The other day, hearing an awful outcry, I hurried off in the direction of the sound. Mr. Ingram had stopped his wagon on the lawn while a small

pair of black legs came flying down the drive and hurriedly climbed up the wheel. Then the little black midget settled herself comfortably in the front of the wagon, and I had to explain that I had come to the aid of the distressed. The truth was, I thought he was beating one of them. 'Oh! that was only Mopsy,' he said indulgently. 'I usually take her along to open gates, but she wasn't ready in time.'

"I am satisfied they are more of a burden to an easy master than a help. I said as much to the young ladies. 'That is one of your mistakes,' said Corinne. 'The greatest comfort in the world is a niggah.' 'Yes,' said Blanche. 'I'd rather have a niggah than a piano.' As Portia remained gravely silent I supposed she was justly offended at my interference. But her earnest questions next day as to the possibility of lessening the burden without turning out the old and the helpless young to suffering and perhaps to death, convinced me that she thought neither of me nor of my interference. Her father's comfort is the one subject of vital importance to Portia."

He had further proof of this one day when he and Mr. Ingram drifted into a political discussion, and Allerton discovered the enemy within this good man's gates, too. "I believe the South is more inclined to nurse its prejudices, to magnify the differences which keep the sectional breach from healing, than the North," he said.

"Certainly you do!" exclaimed Mr. Ingram hotly. "And a great many other things as untrue! That is the trouble with you rhetorical patriots of the North. You have your opinions of us all cut and dried; your fine-spun theories about our local prejudices and our educational limitations. You don't want to know us. That would spoil your little fable."

Though taken on surprise, Allerton was not going to let his anger confuse his mental vision. He felt that an explicit statement of his opinions was now in order, and he gave it with a calm assurance of a reigning Cæsar.

None of the young ladies had been visible on his arrival, but a glance through the open window now discovered Portia who, while awaiting his leisure out on the veranda, must have overheard the whole conversation.

As he came out she rose with a cold bow, and passed haughtily into the house.

Allerton paused with a sudden and unexpected sense of self-condemnation. Yes, he saw, in a flash, that he had acted the impertinent egotist, and that Portia despised him accordingly.

While he paused on the veranda, wondering if it would not be better to go back, and what reparation he could offer Mr. Ingram that would not seem worse than his offence, that good old man came out and apologized for his harsh and hasty words.

Time and physical infirmity, he said, had weakened his power of self-control. Not that the soul deteriorates with the body, but only begins to dwell apart, oftentimes a long while, before the final separation, leaving the poor, weak flesh defenseless. When the mind dwells most in the other world, the body is least fitted to contend with the ills of this.

The tired, absent look in his eyes smote Allerton to the heart, and he hastened to take all the blame on himself. But the breach was not so easily healed with the absurd Portia. Her father had to call her to her lessons, and for several days there was a coolness between them which might have lasted indefinitely, had not Allerton "with wisdom beyond his years," as he wrote to Bertha, feigned entire unconsciousness of it.

These lessons grew more and more interesting to Allerton. They were his recreation, amid much unattractive toil at home and abroad. For he had begun to have little meetings among the colored people — lectures, he called them — to teach, to advise and to help them in innumerable active, practical ways, about their every-day work, as well as their morals and manners. Of course a proceeding of this sort, seeming to cast reproach upon the other white people, was not calculated to win him their confidence and good-will.

But he was not working for popularity. The question was not one of expediency, but of right.

He was right; there was no doubt about that; and if he only worked with sufficient earnestness and fervor to succeed, he would come, in time, to popularity; for success is a thing that everybody admires.

He was hurrying along the avenue, one morning, deeply preoccupied with thoughts like these, when a low murmur of voices attracted his attention in the direction of the rose-arbor. A glance within revealed Portia and Mr. Mallory absorbed in earnest conversation. He turned quickly away, but, in spite of himself, a feeling of anger flashed through him.

He passed quietly on and seated himself in the library, where he waited fifteen minutes. Then he took his leave.

As he hastily repassed the rose-arbor, Portia called after him. He turned reluctantly, for he was in no mood for an encounter with Mallory. However, he had, from the first, resolved on perfect courtesy, and now reminded himself of that resolve with fresh realization of its difficulties.

If either of these young men had been personally unattractive there would have been much less difficulty in overcoming the enmity between them, but each recognized and repelled the charm in the other as a dangerous power. There was a certain majesty in Allerton's quiet self-possession which spoke to the Southerner of the possession of spiritual qualities in which he was consciously lacking. And,

while no sort of pride proceeding from overweening thoughts of one's self is becoming to the pigmies of this earth, that imperiousness, that native air of authority, which had lineally descended upon Mallory, was not without an imposing effect.

Portia struggled in vain to excite a friendly interest between the two. Had Mr. Mallory heard of Mr. Allerton's plan for a public library? and was he going to contribute? But, of course you could always count on Mr. Mallory when there was any work of public improvement on hand.

Mr. Allerton coldly stated that the benefit of a public library was too evident to all who knew anything of the power of books, to require any special demonstration. And Mr. Mallory as coldly returned that, for all who had the time or the inclination for reading, the books were not wanting. "We are not," he said, "without some knowledge of our needs; nor entirely destitute of ambition. But now the supreme need is for repairing a torn and broken-up life; and we have had the sense not to try to do everything at once."

Allerton with equal confidence replied: "There will be no lack of readers. Knowledge is increasing rapidly everywhere. Once started, a public library is sure to grow, and scholars are as sure to spring up about it. Without books, rural life soon becomes narrow and vacant, and frequently sordid and mean. A library is as necessary to the intellectual growth as a church is to the moral."

"There are private libraries around Athens, as good if not as extensive, as any in the country," retorted Mallory. "And there are scholars as sincere and genuine. But the under strata of Kentucky care only for horses, dogs and guns, and hate the sight of a book. The village girls would probably read some of the novels, but the useful reading would be left to the spiders and the mice."

"A novel, if written by a good and wise man, is as likely to be useful reading — more likely, indeed — than most of the difficult and disagreeable things that pass for learning," said Allerton. "Because a lesson is presented in a clear and attractive form is no reason that it is not a real, needful lesson, and much more impressive than dull, dry plodding over purposely roughened ground. There is labor enough in all progress; if any part of it can be brightened by attractive imagery, or ideal representation in any form, by all means let us have it. Only we need to be all the more careful that the fascinating book is really a push onwards and not backwards."

Mallory made no reply, and scarcely glanced at Allerton again. When he was gone, Portia praised him. "He was so kind to my brother when he was wounded. Carried him about and waited on him like a slave. Papa and mamma love him as if he were an own son."

"Perhaps he will be, some day," said Allerton, with a faint smile. "Your sister tells me that his

father and yours had planned a union of the two houses."

"Did Corinne tell you that?" said Portia, with a look of annoyance. "It was nothing but a joke. Of course there was nothing real in it. He and Corinne were married in play when they were little children; and they had a wedding reception — did she tell you that, too?"

"She said that she was the victim specified, but that she lived in the hope that you or Miss Blanche would relieve her of that obligation."

"I don't know about Blanche, but I am sure I never will," exclaimed Portia, with a toss of her head; "I don't believe he wants any of us, anyway."

Thinking it well to encourage this view of the case, Allerton made no denial, whatever he thought.

"Mr. Allerton!" Noticing something unusual in her tone, he turned and looked at her inquiringly. "Don't we seem unbearably stupid and rough and narrow-minded to you sometimes?"

"No; certainly not," rather surprised.

"Aren't you wishing, right now, that you were back in Boston?"

"Not just now — at least."

"You do sometimes. I knew it. And you have to stay here nearly ten more years." She looked at him with the tenderest compassion.

"Have you finished that example in compound fractions?" said Allerton rather severely. And thereafter kept strictly to the duty at hand.

CHAPTER VII.

PINKNEY'S HEIR.

FOR some months The Oaks was, of course, the central point of interest in the neighborhood. Allerton's "new-fangled notions" met with little consideration among the old farmers. "Parlor farming" might do for the suburbs of Boston, but wouldn't pay here.

"It would have tickled Pinkney to see his place looking so trim," Claxton declared to an interested audience on mail-day, "though he hadn't the pluck to do it himself. The Oaks looks as if somebody lived there now."

"O, yes! he works like a Turk. But then, he reads a good deal, too." — Claxton himself was considered a man of letters, though he would get on a "tare" now and then, when it took five or six men to manage him, and his family were in terror for their lives. He had not been other than sober since Allerton came, however; but that was because he had no money.

"Yes," Claxton admitted, "he has trouble in

keeping hands. The darkies don't like his close way of working. They hate taking trouble, too, and can't see any use in keeping farming implements under cover when not in use. They work a week or two; have pressing need of their pay, and then 'low they won't come ag'in.' You see he doesn't know how to manage them. Their slip-shod ways worry him, and he hates to be always finding fault with them. If it wasn't for me he wouldn't get anything done. They know I'd as soon knock 'em in the head as not; and they think all the more of me for it, too. You have to be decided with a darky if you want him to respect you."

Allerton's tastes were "rather pampered"; Claxton could not deny that. He wouldn't touch a thing that was fried — wanted everything steamed or baked. He had turned the linen room into a bath-room, and every day water had to be carried up there, convenient or not convenient. Had to have a dozen towels a week, too; and insisted he could not eat without a napkin, no matter what happened. "Had a lot of rubbish down from Boston the other day; rugs and screens and easels, and hassocks for people to stumble over. And then, think of it! two daily papers, eight or ten weeklies, and a lot of magazines; about twenty-five in all!" And the old farmers, who had one cheap weekly, perhaps, exclaimed that a Boston man cost a good deal.

At this juncture Allerton presented himself at the door. He took off his straw hat and spoke cordially to the group. "You didn't walk!" said one, observing his heated brow.

"Certainly! Why not?" with a look of surprise.

"Oh! nothing; only no one walks here if he's got a horse."

Allerton's face was not a bland one, but his manner was simple and direct; a manner not calculated to make a favorable impression at first, but rarely failing of it in the end.

"I wouldn't 'a' suspected you could make a wooden nutmeg any more'n I could," said one of the old farmers jocosely.

Allerton accepted the implied compliment with a smile. "Oh! some of us are honest. It's the Connecticuters who make the wooden nutmegs."

Mr. Crugar, the elegant dead-beat, was there. He elaborately ignored Allerton. Leaning gracefully against the counter, airily smoking a cigar, he appeared to be deeply engaged in conversation with Major Bumpus, the rich wiskey dealer. A ragged darky came up to him with, "Boss, I'd like to borry a qua'tah fum yo', ef you please."

"See here, Dave," said Crugar, assuming a stern look, and taking the money from his pocket, "this is the last qua'tah I'm going to let you have."

"Yes, seh; thanky, seh, thanky!" and Dave went off cheerfully.

"I'd give that niggah the last cent I had any day, and he knows it," said Crugar, with his elegant drawl.

"Why?" inquired Major Bumpus.

"Well; one mawnin' I went into Dibbles' shaking and trembling, and says I, giving Dibble the wink, 'For the Lawd's sake, Dibble, give me a drink or I'll die.'

"Dibble took the hint, and says he: 'Get out o' heah! I've got no drink fo' you.' 'But, Dibble, I'm nearly dead,' says I imploringly. 'Get out, I tell you!' and Dibble made a rush at me. I started out, trembling. Dave was sweeping up. He looked at me a minute, and a tear came in his eye. 'Mr. Crugah,' says he, 'I've got a dime. I 'lowed to git some meal with it; but you take it an' git you a drink.'

"He took out an old leather pocket-book and unwound about a yard of tow string. There was just one dime in it. He gave that to me. I took the dime and got me a drink. After a while I hunted up Dave and gave him a dollar. Told him I'd collected some money and wanted to pay interest. Now," looking sincerely affected, "you might give me yo' last dime and it wouldn't be much, because you could get credit. But that po' niggah gave me all he had to get a drink of whiskey. And I'd give him the last cent I had! I've given him about twenty dollahs now fo' that dime, and I reckon I'll keep on;" and he sauntered away.

"Crugar's a generous fellow," said Decker, looking after him admiringly. "Witty, too. When Petroleum V. Nasby was here it was a stormy night and there wern't more than fifteen in the audience. Crugar was appointed to introduce him. He came on the stage with Nasby, and began: 'Mr. Nelson, Mr. Nasby, first gentleman to the right. Judge Pirtle, Mr. Nasby,' and so forth on through the fifteen."

"I'd be willing to have him a little less brilliant," said the landlord cynically, "if he'd pay his board-bill."

From his first entrance Allerton had been aware of a sort of leaden scrutiny from the corner where the village oracle, "Uncle Stebbins," sat chewing and spitting. Whenever any of the "young bloods" felt that uncompromising eye upon them they usually managed to have pressing business elsewhere, having a natural antipathy to a public exposition of their sins.

But Allerton, all unwarned by unhappy precedent, calmly advanced to meet his doom.

"What d'you fight the South for? say!" and he spat explosively in Allerton's direction. "Had we done you any harm?"

Allerton turned and looked doubtfully at the old regulator.

"You, I mean!" There was sudden silence in the room.

"We fought to preserve the Union," Allerton

said simply. "Which was even more to your advantage than to ours."

"Humph! — mighty fine way to preserve the Union, fighting is! Why can't you tell the truth, and say you fit because we had niggahs an' you had none?"

"Oh! let te poy alone," remonstrated an old German grocer. "He's not doin' nodin' to you!"

"Great Britain, also the Cantons of Switzerland, you remember, and several other unions, have been preserved by fighting," returned Allerton, not at all certain that any of his hearers had even heard of the Cantons of Switzerland. Yet this courteous habit of assuming every one as well-informed as himself saved him from many an awkward mistake — unsuspected mines of learning opening up in such unexpected quarters! "I thought a Kentuckian would be the last person to dispute the beneficent uses of fighting. Now that the one barrier between us is removed, we are going to be better friends than ever."

"You admit, then," with an air of malicious triumph, "that freeing these slaves, sold us by your sanctimonious fathers, for the biggest price they could get, was your only motive?"

"With me it was," said Allerton unflinchingly. "I saw a 'gang' once on a Mississippi steamer. They were landed on a sand-bar and driven through the deep quick-sand like cattle, by their owner. One poor girl stuck fast and was lashed

over the shoulders like a dog, until she struggled to the shore; I resolved then to do what I could to free them." No one knocked him down, no one challenged him, nor attempted in any way to interrupt his peaceable exit.

"I believe," turning on his surprised auditors, "that Kentuckians were generally good masters. But, no matter how kind you were, you had no power to make others so. There are many who cannot hold absolute power over a fellow-creature, and not abuse it. Slavery is a foul blot on any country; much more so on one proclaiming itself a Free Republic."

"Your desire to free the slaves would have been more noble," said Gen. Witherspoon, of the eagle eye, "if you had been willing to buy them. But this freeing them entirely at the expense of the South, looks to me amazingly like robbery."

"Come home with me to supper," said Judge Pirtle, slipping his arm through Allerton's. "And if the General will come, too, we'll have it out there. We can be neighborly, if we don't see exactly alike."

Allerton wished to be neighborly, and there was no reason why he shouldn't go, if that were the custon of the place; but as they walked across the pastures, Judge Pirtle leading his horse — the General had politely declined — he wondered what Mrs. Pirtle would say when she saw a strange guest coming unexpectedly to tea.

The Judge knew very well what she would say.

"There! he's bringing him at last. Men are such selfish creatures. They go out and amuse themselves, and never think a woman ever wants to see anything. How lucky we had that turkey to-day; they say Yankees won't eat pork. Get out the new tablecloth and napkins, Cleopatra, and put on the best china."

On the following mail-day there was a great sensation. Allerton was not there; he was teaching the negro school.

The teacher whom, after many failures, he had engaged — colored teachers were scarce — had not appeared at the appointed time, and he had opened the school himself.

"I always said there was something queer about the fellow. I knew the cloven foot would show itself sometime or other. I'm glad to say I never invited him to my house; I guess the Ingrams will find it a little awkward to cut him now, after being so intimate. Had the impudence to lecture me on selling whiskey, the blank scoundrel!" And Major Bumpus thrust his hands into his pockets, glanced fiercely, right and left, upon his admiring auditors, and wound up by spitting explosively in the direction of the cuspidore on the other side of the room.

His patient watching for the cloven foot which Allerton had succeeded so well in concealing, had at last met with its reward.

"The Ingrams are not going to cut him. They've got too much sense to cut a man because he is doing what he honestly believes to be his duty," said Judge Pirtle coldly. "It is only temporary; and even if it wasn't — if he proposed to teach the blasted niggahs the rest of his life — I should consider it a noble thing; all the nobler because it is not agreeable. Did anybody ever find fault with Hercules for cleaning the Euxine stables? Did anybody feel called on to cut him? I say, it's a noble work!" raising his voice so that it couldn't fail of reaching the remotest corner of the grocery post-office. "And we ought to be ashamed of ourselves for leaving it to a stranger, much less making it so hard for him."

The Major's face took on a yet fiercer hue. It was a mean, low-lived business! It would plumb spile the niggah for work. Didn't he know 'em better'n that blamed, meddling Yankee? Couldn't the trifling, no-account whites read? It 'ud only be an excuse for fritterin' away time on trashy story-papers, like them. And he blew a yet louder blast, and spat still more vindictively at the cuspidore.

Judge Pirtle followed with an answering volley, more vigorous and cutting than before, and then both were ready for blows.

Though seldom deficient in words, the true eloquence of the Kentuckian lays in his supple fists; but the Major's friends fortunately suc-

ceeded in hustling him out of the room, and no one was hurt, at least not bodily. If there was any serious damage it was in the broken-up feelings of the whole community.

Major Bumpus, the rich "whiskey king," had been a "neutral" during the war. Kentucky's motto, "United we stand, divided we fall," kept many of her sons true to the Union, and many others inactive. But it is very doubtful if Major Bumpus knew the motto at all; and if he did, would have been much less concerned in preserving the Union than in saving a dollar.

He had been considered a generous master. Prided himself on the sleek, well-fed condition of his slaves — the secret of which lay in the fact that they worked better when in good condition. His ambition had been to own a "hund'ed." But "as sure as he started home with the hund'edth, one o' the ninety-nine at home up and died before he got there."

"Wasn't it enough," he rumbled on, after Judge Pirtle had trotted off to his office with his papers, and forgotten the whole thing, "wasn't it enough that they had to endure this Yankee in their midst, to treat him as if he were one of their own stripe, without having his opinions forced down their throats in this blanked fashion?"

Claxton, who usually reflected the prevailing opinion by his opposition to it, who fiercely fought Allerton's battles, in season and out of

season, oftentimes doing him much injury and no good by resenting little things it would never have occurred to Allerton to notice, now took up the cudgels with a right good will. For, though he eagerly drank his whiskey whenever he could get it, Claxton's keener mind and wider range of sympathies made him hate the dense arrogance, the grasping hardness, of the great distiller.

Then Gen. Witherspoon, as straight and as stiff as a rifle, fired his shot with the decision of infallibility. Forced education was all nonsense. When the niggers (no dropping of r's about him) felt the need of schools, then schools would be provided for them. "If you listen to all that Boston chap's fine-spun theories — about as practical as climbing a rainbow — you'll find yourself, like the scheming Babelites when they tried to build a short cut to Heaven, in the midst of confounded confusion. He'll be having them at table next. What a thing it is to be a conscientious Puritan — a cultured Bostonian!"

This speech, and the General's austere smile, threw a more kindly light on Allerton's "eccentricities." How could a fellow help inherited crankisms?

Very few of the colored people opposed the school, and those were the old, "wise men" of the race — wise in their own conceit. "It'll plumb spile a niggah. He'll get above grubbin' in de groun' fo' a libbin," said Uncle Peter, head deacon

of the Baptist church. "An' book larnin' ain't going to put no money in his pocket."

Uncle Peter was one of Mallory's men, who soon found out that Allerton and his schemes were not in high favor with his master.

But the majority of the race, especially those with Caucasian blood in their veins and Caucasian pride in their hearts, were keen to go to school and "l'arn to live like white folks;" that is, without manual labor.

The Ingrams justified Judge Pirtle's judgment of them by "standing up" for Allerton on all occasions. They had little faith in his theories, but they had faith in the soundness of his motives. Even Mrs. Ingram, who had never had any real liking for him, defended him in her own peculiar way. And the young ladies who did little but scout the whole thing to his face, were fierce enough in his defense.

"You have made a serious mistake," Mr. Ingram said to Allerton. "That sort of thing has never been done here before. It is bound to lower you in the eyes of the people. I don't say that it ought, but it will."

"It is time there was some such precedent," said Allerton, and went his way.

Portia said nothing to Allerton, but she talked it over with her father, and wished that Cæsar and Cassius might go to school as well as Brutus.

"I can't spare them now," said her father.

"But they shall go in the winter. It may unsettle them for work; but it does seem hard they can't read the Bible."

"If you would speak to them, papa, about the advantage of knowing how to read and write and calculate, I think they would try harder to learn."

Her father was touched. "You are right, Portia. We have no right to hold aloof and let a stranger do for our people what we ought to do ourselves."

Then she went to her mother. "Mamma, why can't Til and Queen go to school? They ought to be taught something, so as to be able to take care of themselves now they are free."

"Go to school? Why, I don't care; only their mothers want them at home to help them."

"Their mothers don't know what they want. They are waiting to be told."

"Well, there's the sweeping and dusting and dining-room work" —

"I can do some of it. I need more exercise, any way."

"Very well; I don't care; only the house must be kept clean, and you'll get no help from Corinne and Blanche."

"I don't want any help," said Portia confidently.

One day as Mallory rode home with her from the post-office — he did that quite frequently — she cautiously broached the subject to him.

Mallory was popular in his own neighborhood. He seemed to have the happy faculty of imparting his own cordiality and friendliness to others. Every one they met called out "How are you, Mallory?" and some must needs stop for further greeting.

"You like so many people," said Portia, "I can't understand why you do not like Mr. Allerton. To him alone, you are hard and sharp, and unlike yourself."

"Have you forgotten that we fought on opposite sides? I hope you are not going to turn Yankee?" and he glanced at her keenly.

"Do you never forgive anything?" exclaimed Portia. "How long is that old war to be kept up? Is that what you've been glowering around about?"

Just then they met Mallory's overseer, who stopped his horse, saying, with a worried look: "Something must be done with Blue Pete. He's always gitting into trouble. He hit old Aaron in the back with an axe, and we had to send for Dr. Savage last night. He nearly died. Old Aaron's folks are all wrothy and demand somethings being done with Blue Pete."

"Old Aaron provoked him, I suppose," returned Mallory. "He'll have to be whipped, or fined, or sent to jail, I suppose," and he heaved a deep sigh. "Pete would prefer the whipping. And all the family will leave. Wash and Jeff and Pierce and

Andy Jackson — the whole team! And I don't see how we can spare them."

"Well, perhaps old Aaron'll get better," suggested the overseer.

"Well, give Pete his choice. Or, perhaps I can get Tiller to come down and talk to them," brightening. "That would settle the whole thing. I don't take much stock in sanctimonious doings myself," catching a derisive glance in Portia's eye, "but the darkies are so superstitious it has a good deal of effect on them. And Tiller is a good fellow, if he is a preacher."

"If it weren't for the preachers and the teachers," said Portia, "this country would be uninhabitable. This superstition, as you call it, is our only means of governing the lawless. Now that these conscienceless people are turned loose on us to do as they please, it is dreadful to think what they might do in a fit of ill-temper."

"Blue Pete is one of the pillars of the church. Sings and prays louder than anybody; but that doesn't keep him from killing a man next day."

"If they could read, don't you think that might help to keep them out of mischief?" suggested Portia, with the natural craft of her sex.

Mallory cast another searching glance in her direction, and there was a pause in the conversation. He was pondering over a colloquy between Corinne and her mother, a few days before.

"If papa doesn't look out," said Corinne, "he'll

find himself father-in-law to a Yankee yet. Portia's dead in love with him, though she's such a goose she doesn't know it."

"I don't suppose your papa cares," returned Mrs. Ingram, "or he wouldn't have placed the child directly under his influence. I don't suppose he ever expected much better of Portia, for all he thinks her such a prodigy."

He said nothing of this to Portia, but he vowed to himself that she should not marry that scoundrel, if he could help it.

"You see, he's a typical Yankee," he said in answer to her question, not thinking it worth while to repeat Allerton's name, "with all the Yankee stubbornness and thirst for power. That they have us in bodily subjection is not enough for them; they want to force us into their way of thinking. I hate tyranny in any form; and above all, I hate fanatical tyranny."

That was the worst he ever said against Allerton. He made no effort to conceal his aversion; but Allerton was wrong when he imagined that Mallory went about stirring up enmity against him.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HUNTERS.

TALL trees stood solemnly about, their interlacing branches forming a thick canopy overhead. "Peace, peace, to him that is afar off," Allerton read as he reclined on the shadowed bank underneath.

This was his tabernacle; here he could realize that God dwelt on earth as well as in Heaven; here he could put aside his fatigue and worry; his longing for the dear, familiar voices to tell him that he was not as solitary and unloved as he felt. Here he could surround himself with a new atmosphere, and breathe the air of peace, though he was afar from all that was dear.

Because others despised him was no indication that God despised him. Perhaps for that very reason, because he was more humble, less imbued with the self-righteousness of success, he was all the more esteemed of the pitying Father.

And thus comforting himself, he searched the Word, while the birds twittered softly overhead, and near by two streams, meeting impetuously,

percipitated themselves together over an abrupt declivity with a rapturous musical chant.

Suddenly this brooding harmony was broken by the loud baying of hounds; a terrified animal sped past and darted into a knot-hole of an old oak, and the next instant the spot was filled with mounted hunters, and yelping hounds.

Among them was Mallory, who, oblivious of Allerton's presence, dismounted eagerly and called to Jack Snead to come and cut down the tree.

Unaccustomed to this peculiarly Southern indifference to the authority of ownership, Allerton regarded the proceedings in amazed silence until the first gash of the axe awoke his sleeping ire. "Stop that!" he shouted.

"Hello!" with his axe suspended in mid air. Jack stared in pretended dismay.

"I take it for granted," said Allerton, in courteous tones, though his eyes were stern and dark, "that you are not aware this is my property."

"Beg pahden, seh," said Jack, with a ludicrous travesty of Allerton's civil tone and manner. "We had no time to enquieh afteh objections. You know, of coas, it's a wild-cat? Shall we retiah and leave the beast in possession?"

"You will oblige me by letting the tree alone," said Allerton firmly.

"But, my deah seh, the wild-cat" —

"I know it is a fox, or coon, or something of the kind," interrupted Allerton.

"Pay him for the tree, and go on!" exclaimed Mallory, with a look of unspeakable disgust.

The hunters stood about in puzzled indecision.

"A valuable tree," said one, meditatively.

"Worth at least a quarter of a cent, if you could make the change," said another.

"You might cut off the corner of a postage stamp," suggested the third.

"If a ten-penny nail and my old jack-knife would square matters, he's welcome to 'em," said Jack, as he took the pocket-book Mallory handed him. The hounds yelped impatient protest against this strange delay. "At how much do you value this noble oak?" inquired Jack, with a further glance at the impassive owner.

"I have no wish to sell it," said Allerton coldly, his eyes flashing.

"But, my deah seh" —

"Give him ten dollars and cut the old shell down," roared Mallory. "Boys, will you go on?"

The cutting was renewed.

Allerton walked resolutely up to the tree and planted himself, like a stone pillar, between it and the chopper.

"Let it alone!" he commanded, pale with rage.

"Cracky!" exclaimed Jack, dropping the axe.

"Sir," said Mallory, addressing him personally for the first time, though with a haughty air as if to an inferior, "such property, as you call it, is not so much of a rarity here as it probably has

been with you; and as you are so fresh in the matter of ownership, your ignorance of the etiquette of hunting can be overlooked."

"Nevah knew a man to object befo'," put in the irrepressible Jack. "Why, the most of 'em ah only too glad to get the vahments killed, and their old trees cut down. Pay us, often as not."

"But, of coas," put in another, "if you insist, we'll leave 'em alone."'

"I do insist."

"But the wild-cat," began Jack, with difficulty restraining his laughter.

"Let the blamed blockhead alone!" exclaimed Mallory. "You might as well try to reason with a mule." And he looked Allerton full in the face, as if in expectation of some aggressive demonstration.

But none came.

"You were so good as to pardon me a breach of good manners, just now," he answered, smiling ironically, "I return you the favor with pleasure."

"I have no wish for pardon," Mallory returned, with a baleful glare. "I mean what I say. You are like a stubborn mule. You take a stand for no reason, and keep to it against all reason, merely because you have taken it. Of what use to you is that one pitiful old tree?"

"Let's duck him, boys!" suggested Jack, in a loud whisper.

The boys looked at the pale, determined face of

the proposed victim, but made no movement toward complying.

Here Jack's threadbare restraint gave way, and peal after peal of rollicking laughter echoed through the woods.

Anger and hatred and malice could not long withstand that merry sound, and soon the whole party remounted amidst jests and laughter, called off the reluctant hounds and rode away.

Meantime Corinne and Portia, cantering along the highway, heard the dogs. "Let's ride to the top of the hill and see the hunters go by," said Corinne. "I do dearly love a chase."

From the top of the hill they witnessed its premature ending. Corinne was for going forward at once to discover the cause, but Portia held her back. "I think there is a quarrel in progress."

After the hunters were gone they descended upon Allerton, standing stern and solitary in the midst of his trees.

"What's the matter?" inquired Corinne curiously. "What were those hunters doing here?"

"Nothing," he replied, his countenance relaxing. "But they wanted to cut down that tree."

"Well, there's a fox, or something, in it; that is why they wanted to cut it."

As Allerton looked into the cool inquisitive eyes, strong indignation sparkled in his own. "Destroy this grand old tree, that has been centuries in growing, for one pitiful fox!"

"Why, Mr. Allerton, what possible difference could one old tree make when there are so many?" said Corinne.

"It is a small thing in your estimation because there are so many. In the same way ambitious generals regard human life: one doesn't matter because there are so many."

"It would have spoiled this lovely spot," said Portia, gazing along the shadowy aisles with absent, wistful eyes. "I wonder if Heaven isn't something like this? I hope it is."

"Like this!" cried Corinne, in a tone of disgust. "Don't you know that Heaven is a city, with golden streets and jeweled gates? And I'm glad of it, for I'm tired of the country."

Corinne had dismounted and was walking about, tossing stones into the ravine and listening to the splash in the water below. "Here is one of Mr. Mallory's hounds," she said, approaching the dog who stood on the edge of the cliff alternately tearing up the earth in great clouds, and pawing fiercely at his head.

"Poor thing, he's hurt! Poor Pompey! Let me see what the matter is." She put out her bare hand to pat his head, when the hound turned suddenly and bit it.

With a wild shriek Corinne sprang to her feet.

"He has bitten me!" she screamed. "Look at his eyes! He's mad! he's mad!"

Allerton snatched a stick, and with one blow

sent the dog howling over the brink of the cliff. Portia sprang from her horse and seized the wounded hand.

"O, Portia! What shall I do?" sobbed Corinne. "Must I die — that awful death! You remember that q-queen — how she saved her h-husband; you always said she was so — so grand, so heroic! More c-courageous — than all the Gr-Greek heroes — who beat each other only because they were q-quarrelsome."

Allerton came up with his hand full of clay. "I have seen this applied to poisonous stings with immediate relief," he said. But before he could apply the clay — before he had a thought of the mad thing she was going to do — Portia bent swiftly over her sister's hand and applied her lips to the wound.

"Oh! how could you let her do it?" he cried, as he snatched Portia violently away. "An utterly useless sacrifice, even if the dog is mad, which I do not believe." And he dragged Portia to the stream with little ceremony, and insisted on her scrubbing out her mouth with her handkerchief.

Evidently he had quite forgotten Corinne.

"Here," as Portia stood washing and scrubbing her mouth with feverish energy, looking more disgusted than alarmed, "here, fill your mouth with this clay. It is clean, and can't hurt you, even if it does no good. I don't believe the dog is mad. I'm going down to see."

CHAPTER IX.

THEORY AND PRACTICE.

APRIL the fifteenth, 1873.

Eight years of plowshares and pruning-hooks, and the sounds of war slowly subsiding in the memory of the vanquished South; the French Republic tossing on an uncertain sea, with the wary Thiers still at the helm; Queen Victoria launching another volume of domestic annals on the uncertain wave of popular favor, and Disraeli, ex-premier and novelist, quietly passing to the command of Her Majesty's ship of state Brittania; Pius the Infallible, robbed of his Vatican thunder, waking the echoes of the earth with the deeper resonance of a holy martyrdom, and Allerton putting to the test the crucial question of equal rights, while the tide of race prejudice is at its highest.

"These colored people," he said, "are here for future generations. They are increasing rather than diminishing; they must be brought up from that low grade of thought and feeling which hopeless insubordination creates, which inexperience and

lack of responsibility foster. No other nation has had to deal with so difficult a problem; the eyes of the world are upon us."

He had made several discoveries during the past year. He understood now why a hard-working man like Mr. Ingram could barely make a living on a rich farm of six or eight hundred acres. He had discovered the occasion of leakage in pantry and store-room. He had found out how it was that such swarms of "darkies" managed to subsist on "truck-patches," squandering the little they did earn, like children, on useless things.

In spite of the strictest watch, the most earnest reproof, and even punishment, they would steal. Some of the most active participants in his Sunday afternoon service were the most incorrigible rogues.

"Yet, having proclaimed them our equals, we must treat them as such," he reasoned, and made a feast, gathering his guests from the highways and byways.

To this feast he also invited Gen. Witherspoon, Judge Pirtle, and Col. Ingram; but these gentlemen wisely managed to have urgent engagements elsewhere. Even Claxton failed him; and he sat down to his bountiful board surrounded only by dusky faces.

He shrank from this step, which he knew would place him more than ever at enmity with the people around him. But when he had fully convinced himself that it was a duty and a debt owed by the

whites to the colored race, he had no thought of shirking.

The dinner, one Saturday afternoon at two, was such as he would have provided for "white folks." The guests presented themselves, according to a previous hint from their entertainer, in spotless attire. They looked very solemn. Allerton called on the humblest of the company for the "blessing."

"O, Lord," he began boldly. An awful pause, a groan, a sniffle. The occasion was too much for him. "You'll haf to 'scuse me, Boss, I can't git fru," he simpered. "Nevah wuz in sich good company afoah."*

The most of them ate very fast, glancing furtively at Allerton from time to time. The napkins scared them more than anything. Two or three put them under their plates, evidently concluding they were meant to protect the new red and white tablecloth.

The three or four bright mulattoes who had been house servants were more at their ease. They copied Allerton's manner as nearly as possible, addressing casual remarks to their neighbors, as if to say, "This is nothing new to me, boys!" The rest were uneasy and subdued. Allerton took care that no dead silences should befall them. Between the school-teacher on his right, and the preacher on his left, they managed to keep up an easy flow of local chit-chat, now and then extracting frightened remarks from the awe-stricken.

* Fact.

When it was all over the whole party drew a long breath of relief. The stereopticon exhibition which followed they thoroughly enjoyed. Yet, for all his minute explanations, Allerton was chagrined to discover a few days afterward that many of them believed him a "conjurer."

Of course the affair occasioned much comment. Major Bumpus swore louder, and turned redder than ever; Judge Pirtle laughed, Gen. Witherspoon smiled grimly, and Col. Ingram defended the experiment as a noble martyrdom for a mistaken cause — "like our fight for slavery."

But it was the effect on the colored people themselves about which Allerton was most concerned, and when he saw the minister coming up the lawn the next morning, he took up a hoe and began to clip the weeds about the flower borders, well-knowing his visitor would talk more freely there than seated on a cushioned chair in the house.

"'Tain't white folks ez keeps niggahs back," he said, after a rambling autobiographical talk of half an hour. "It's de trifling niggahs deyselves." Then he asked for a contribution; he did not say for what, and finished up with, "Boss, when you gits fru wid dem dah breeches you'll give 'em to me, won't you?" Allerton was taken aback. "Perhaps," he said, neutrally.

"Most fru wid 'em now, ain't yo'?" he suggested. "They looks sorto used up."

Was that all he had done for them? How

was he to elevate them until this deep-rooted old cancer, cupidity, was thoroughly eradicated from their system?

In spite of his dignity the old women would joke him about the young ladies, and suggest the desirability of this match or that. When the men found that he was no more inclined to put up with slack work than the rest of the masters, they continued shy of making him any definite promise of service. More than anything, they loved an easy time; few would work at all without watching.

If he went unexpectedly into the kitchen, when neither Mrs. Claxton nor Sylvia were about, he was very liable to interrupt a waltz. Fascinated and unconscious, the dusky damsels would fail to discover the eye of authority until a warning note from the mother — whose sudden severity was well understood by them — forced on them a realizing sense of unwashed dishes and unswept floors.

"Stop dat dancin', you good-fo'-nothin' huzzies, an' 'ten' to dem dishes, aw I'll knock de tops o' yo' heads offen yo', fust t'ing you knows!" she would call out loudly. "A-singin' an' a-dancin' roun' heah, an' a-leabin' me all de wuk to do." And the culprits would fly at the dishes with a scared look that was well-calculated to disarm affronted authority.

He saw now how useless it was to go into a country and try to turn it upside down all at once. Portia, indeed, had answered satisfactorily

to all his efforts, but recently a vista of possible danger had opened up in that direction, too.

One day, having been unavoidably detained until late in the afternoon, he was met by Mopsy with, "Miss Po'tia down in de yawd; ben down dah all evenin'." He found her stretched out on the grass, face downward, apparently fast sleep. He was, by this time, too accustomed to the ease-loving habits of Southerners to feel much surprised at anything, yet his soul was none the less vexed.

Pausing at a decorous distance he called her name. Instantly she sprang erect and looked at him with startled eyes. "I thought you weren't coming," she murmured.

"Wern't you asleep?" he inquired.

"Asleep? No; I haven't been asleep."

Allerton looked at her with grave eyes, for he remembered how earnestly she had deplored her lack of time for various household improvements which she had in mind. "Always ready for entertainment," he thought cynically, "never for any thing serious and practical.

"And you have voluntarily squandered this lovely afternoon in unmitigated loafing," he said, only half in jest. "I am afraid these hands, naturally so capable, are destined to take but a limited share in the hard work of this busy world. And they might be so useful!"

"And so mischievous," she added, with her ready laugh.

But he refused to be propitiated. His cold silence seemed to decline having anything to do with such argument. Portia accepted his reproof with meekness, merely asking permission to examine the herbarium he carried under his arm.

She examined the specimens absently and with little interest. She did not care for dried plants, she said. She liked to see the flowers growing, but cared nothing for them after they were dead.

"But to find out all about them — how they are formed, how they grow — that is to be acquainted with them. To you, they are little more than mere patches of color."

It was useless urging upon Portia anything for which she had no liking. There were some things which she could not, or would not, learn. As for Allerton, he would have learned everything which God had done, or man.

"Acquired sense," she declared capriciously, "is no sense. It is only varnish."

"Some study and acquire knowledge, others acquire only egotism," he returned, with a smile. "If you think, after you have read, and form opinions of your own, and do not fall into the error of considering yourself superior to everybody who has not read, then you will certainly derive great benefit from acquaintance with the thoughts of others."

Then, as Portia merely laughed, he slyly added, "I have shown you my book and you have not

admired it; now, suppose you show me yours, and give me a chance to retaliate."

He had caught a glimpse of a bulky folio, over which, at the sound of his voice, she had hastily spread her dress, and he suspected it a novel of doubtful repute. He was convinced of this when she started and changed color, but failed to act on his suggestion.

"Perhaps, as your teacher," he further suggested, "I might be of use in selecting the books from which you would be likely to derive the most knowledge and the least egotism."

"I thought once of showing it to you," dragging forth from its hiding-place a voluminous manuscript, sewed together in the form of a book, "but I did not like to trouble you so much with my affairs. It may be of no use," looking rather embarrassed, "but it was hard work, and I did the best I could."

"Hello!" exclaimed Allerton, staring in amazement. "You haven't written all this since I told you about Christian Reid, and all those plucky Southern writers?"

"Yes, I have," she reluctantly admitted.

"And I warned you of the folly of this sort of thing!" turning it over with the look of one aweary of a vain and futile world.

"Haven't I as good a chance for success as any of them?"

"Where one succeeds a thousand waste their

youth and health to find themselves miserably disappointed in the end. Even if you succeeded you would only find yourself a target in the crowd not only for mud, but stones, and other deadly missiles; for there are humun beings who have lived in the mire until purity and innocence is a strange and incomprehensible thing to them. They see crookedly, and mistake white for black, and say insulting things about all women who become objects of public interest, or curiosity, rather. Your private letters would be published, and every act and word of your life worked over to suit the imagination of some reckless newspaper writer; for evil is as often wrought by want of thought, as want of heart. Ambition is one of the enemy's two-edged swords by which he slays his thousands."

"But I am not ambitious. I felt like writing, and I wrote; I did hope that I might make some money by it. I know papa does not consider me a burden, but I know well enough I am."

"True," said Allerton, and his smile had more sarcasm in it than he knew; "but women — that is, Southern women — are not expected to work for money. That would lower them in the eyes of their friends. You'll be married some day, of course; then your husband, if he is the worthy fellow he ought to be, will attend to all that."

"I shall never be married," said Portia quickly and firmly. "I shall live with my father while he

lives. Besides, I think every woman ought to have some profession or occupation by which she can support herself and contribute her part to the help of the unfortunate; and you think so, too. How long is it since you said that so many young men were killed in the war, half the young ladies would now have to be old maids?" And Portia eyed him sternly.

"But I did not think you would be one of them," said Allerton, trying hard not to laugh.

The manuscript itself was a pathetic thing, made up of scraps of wrapping paper, fly-leaves of books, and blank pages of old letters, all neatly trimmed and pasted out to an equal size. He could imagine the look of surprise and amusement with which such a work of art would be greeted in a New York or Boston publishing house.

"Your choice of a profession has not been a wise one," he said, "unless you feel yourself driven to it by some restless mental force which must be stirring for good or evil."

Portia sprang to her feet, exclaiming that the mosquitoes were unbearable, and moved quickly toward the house, looking flushed and resentful.

"A piece of raw beef is said to be good for keeping mosquitoes away," he suggested, smiling to himself.

"I would gladly consent to set them a table if they would consent to keep to it," said Portia irritably.

Corinne stood leaning on the balustrade with languid grace, engaged in teasing the gray African parrot hanging overhead. This was "Sylvester," one of the household tyrants and treasures. They had refused fifty dollars for Sylvester when they had scarcely butter to put on their bread. "What's the matter?" inquired Corinne, eying the two as they came up the walk. "Didn't the learned Portia know her lessons?"

"He says Southern women are not expected to work, Corinne."

"Glad to hear it, I am sure."

"He thinks idleness one of the cardinal sins."

"Busybodies are much worse than idlers," said Corinne. "If you tiresome Yankees had your way, you'd turn this world into a work-shop; then I'd want to get out of it."

"That is why you Southerners are behind in literature, art, manufacture — everything that requires persistent effort," and he glanced at Portia with a smile; "you expect to do everything at a dash."

"You couldn't love a woman who was not industrious, perhaps?" And Corinne inspected him quizzically.

"No; I believe I should soon tire of the useless piece of furniture," he laughed.

"Then you prize people according to their utility?"

"Isn't that just?"

"That," exclaimed Portia, with a look of scorn, "is the sort of love I should despise. Do you suppose if papa were blind, and deaf, and helpless, that I wouldn't infinitely prefer living in a hut and working for him all my days, to lounging my life away in the richest, most gifted company in the world? I have no wish to use my friends; I would a thousand times rather be of use to them."

"Yes, any of us would prefer that. It flatters our egotism. We would like to be indispensable to the universe; but instead of that we are all of us dependent in one way or another." Yet her feeling was so evidently genuine that he regarded her with involuntary approval.

"Portia is the laziest one of us," said Corinne, "though you wouldn't think it to hear her talk. She always makes her dresses the plainest way."

"The people of the South are more for ease, for others as well as themselves, than those of the North"

"Who are more for sacrificing others as well as themselves," suggested Corinne.

"Perhaps," he assented. "For instance, my sister taught a colored mission-school, and would have nursed in the public hospital, if she had been old enough, during the war. Would any thing induce you to do either?"

For all her self-control Corinne's sudden look of disappointment told him how much this information lowered the standing of his family in her

estimation. "I am not very heroic," she murmured, "and the matter is looked on so differently here. I should be in disgrace with all my friends."

Allerton carried the manuscript home with him and read it; at least, the most of it. And he wondered how so bright a girl as Portia could write anything so dull.

One thing, however, kept his interest alive, and he laughed and frowned and bit his lip, half in amusement, half in vexation, as he read of the "noble-souled" hero of the North who had fired the heart of the "gifted daughter of the haughty Southron" with such inextinguishable devotion as no end of persecution could quench; for the noble-souled hero was too evidently himself, and the gifted heroine Portia Ingram.

He reviewed the progress of their acquaintance, endeavoring to recall every conversation having the slightest personal flavor; and a flush crept over his countenance as he detected, unmistakably, a timid, unconscious movement of girlish preference in his own direction.

"I might have known it!" he exclaimed, half impatiently, half indulgently. "What foolish things girls are! And how deceiving! Even Portia, with all her independence and self-command — like wax awaiting the moulder's hand. Well, we will soon put an end to this piece of foolishness."

CHAPTER X.

A NOTE OF WARNING.

"WHAT was that queer-looking package Mr. Allerton took away with him?" Corinne inquired after he was gone.

"It was a novel I've been writing," answered Portia, frowning over her geometry.

"Well, why has he got it? He isn't a publisher, is he?"

"He will criticise it; tell me its faults."

"You'd better have let me see it first. Do you know, Portia, you are falling in love with Mr. Allerton?" said Corinne bluntly. "You had better take care or he will find it out." — At the same time Allerton was pondering her manuscript with heightened color. — "Men are so vain, they are quick to fancy one is in love with them."

"Corinne," facing her sister with blazing eyes, "how dare you say such a thing; I won't have such a thing said. You judge everybody by yourself."

And she took her books and went off, more angry than any of them had ever seen her before.

Every one but Allerton had noticed the change in Portia; Mrs. Ingram in displeased silence, Corinne with open suspicion, and her father and Blanche with simple satisfaction. She no longer spent her leisure in poring over old magazines, in odd corners, but went dancing over the house and lawn as if the royal privileges of her youth had just dawned upon her. Her fitful moods, her ready laughter, and her sudden irritation, too, were very unlike the quiet Portia of old. Her dress also had begun to exhibit an ornamental tendency; her bodice to assume a more fashionable tightness and hardness of outline.

Of the latter fact Allerton had not been so unobservant, and, as usual, had spoken out his disapproval quite plainly, though with his usual gentle courtesy.

"Wouldn't you like to study physiology?" he suggested. "It is such a useful study; indispensable, in fact, if you are going to live a healthful, useful, happy life."

"I have studied physiology?" said Portia, who was clasping and unclasping the antique bracelet on her arm.

"Oh! you have," he exclaimed, with an emphasis which caused her to look up in surprise.

"Yes; papa heard my lessons."

Allerton was silent a minute. Then he said, with mingled surprise and regret, "You have studied physiology, and yet wear tight shoes and lace."

He did not look at Portia, but felt the ominous silence which followed.

"If I did wear tight shoes and lace," she said at length, with portentous calmness, "I confess I do not see how it can matter to you. But as I do neither" — She declined further waste of words.

"Anything concerning the welfare of a single human being," he said, "concerns me. To cramp the body, especially in youth, not only dwarfs it, but deranges the whole system, shortens life, dulls the mind, and belittles the soul. And vanity is at the root of it. I say this to you because you are young and simply follow the example of others. I do not believe you have the false taste to admire a distorted shape, nor the vanity to care so much for your personal appearance. You wished me to tell you of all your faults, you know."

His friendly smile disarmed her anger. "Do they wear everything loose in Boston?" she inquired satirically.

"Here is a picture of my sister; judge for yourself. That lace dress is a hundred years old. It was our great grandmother's. She was presented at the English court in that dress."

"How lovely! No, she doesn't lace. And how much more beautiful than the tight hard curves of the fashion plates. I wish you would show this picture to Corinne and Blanche. Why, my cors — my dress isn't half as tight as theirs."

And so it had ended, as usual, in her acceptance

of his opinion as authority in this little personal matter, as well as in more important subjects.

The next time Allerton came he proposed going out on the lawn. He did not look at Portia, else he would have missed the usual bright look of welcome. "Bring your drawing-book and we will sketch awhile after the lessons are finished."

"I do not care to sketch this morning," said Portia, in a low tone.

"What! Is your industry flagging so soon? Some of the wheat fell on stony ground, you remember, and sprang up and flourished for a season — and so forth."

Portia laughed a little, and brought out her sketch-book. "Will you tell me, then, about my manuscript, or have you read it?"

"O yes! I have read it," he returned, but said no more, though he knew that Portia was dying to hear.

At the conclusion of the lessons Allerton took up his sketch-book and brushes, placed his box of water colors, and a wide-mouthed bottle filled with water, on the grass beside him, and began to paint a clump of cypress trees.

"Why don't you paint those wild verbenas?" said Portia. "See how bright they are."

"I left them for you."

"To spoil?"

When they had painted a few minutes in silence, Portia dropped her book on the grass. "Isn't it nice here? How can you sit there painting those gloomy cypress trees while the birds sing so? It is delightful merely to sit and stare. See that lovely red-bird looking at us, with his head on one side, as if to say, 'What are you doing here, anyhow?' How easily he hops on his little broom-straw legs. He doesn't know old Winter is waiting for him just around the corner. Paint him, do, and leave the cypress till another time."

"I like these cypress trees; they remind me of a memorable episode in my life," he gravely returned. "A memory most precious, though unspeakably sad."

"The death of some dear friend?" she asked compassionately.

"I rarely speak of it," and his voice took on a yet more solemn tone, "but I will tell you about it if you care to hear."

"I do care, very much."

There was a short pause, in which Portia pushed back her straw hat and assumed an easy, listening attitude.

"It was in the midst of cypress trees like these, in Southern Alabama, that I first knew of the greatest sorrow of my life. We were only a small scouting party, but many strange things had befallen us."

Then as he began to speak of his camp life, the

rush and roar, the clack and din, the danger, the rage without and within, the power of excitement took hold on him; his dark eyes blazed, the color flashed into his cheeks, and a lovely light came into Portia's face, and her eyes flashed, too.

Suddenly, as he remembered his auditor and purpose, voice and eyes fell, and he went on to describe, in hushed tones, how seven years ago he had read beneath trees like these a letter that was the death-warrant to his happiness in this world.

As he told the story of his love for Amy Hobert and its sad ending Portia listened with fixed attention. He vaguely felt the intensity of the stillness with which she heard this undreamed-of chapter in his life.

On the eve of his parting with Amy he had urged an immediate marriage; this she had firmly opposed. The thought that she might die did not even occur to him, circumstances rendering his own death so much more probable, and her refusal aroused in his breast a bitter pang of jealousy, for Amy was beautiful and had many admirers.

Called away unexpectedly, he had barely time for a few hurried lines of farewell, and, with the selfish cruelty of a jealous lover, he allowed six weeks to pass before writing again; and then — and then came the shock which sent him into battle careless whether he lived or died.

Amy had grown more and more uneasy at his prolonged silence, passing at length from feverish

anxiety into wild delirium which ended at last in death.

"Oh! how sad," murmured Portia, with a deep breath. "Poor Amy! and she never saw nor heard from you again."

"For a long while," he resumed, after a brief pause, "I could not feel resigned. It seemed such a useless thing, and then, unavailing remorse. Ah! those were miserable days. Not until long after did I discover the hidden blessing in that fiery trial. To every soul who loves Him, Jesus says at one time or another, 'Come apart and suffer with me.' I drew nearer to Him, and the fire ceased to hurt. I have started in a new path. Domestic happiness, that once seemed the dearest thing in life, I have put aside, and without regret. It is usually a barrier to any difficult, impersonal work." Then, after another pause, he added in a final tone, "Whatever service may fall to my lot, I can now go on with it undeterred by domestic duties or romantic dreams."

"Poor Amy!" she repeated, with another heavy sigh.

Allerton was touched by this unselfish sorrow, and for the first time that afternoon observed her furtively. He remarked the grace of her attitude as she sat on the grass, her hands clasped around her knees, after the fashion of the æsthetic "Patience" maidens, her blonde hair pushed back, her blue-gray eyes fixed absently on the disparaged cypress

trees, and he forgot to wonder over the lightness of this sorrow which he had thought overwhelming.

When he was gone Portia took up her brushes and began to paint the wild verbenas. She painted steadily until he was out of sight, then laid the brushes aside. All at once her work seemed trivial and aimless; life itself seemed trivial and aimless. Suddenly she felt a tear drop on her hand. She started, and then, to her surprise, found that she was crying.

Portia was startled. "Can it be, as Corinne says, that I was falling in love with him?" Her lip curled with scorn. "Perhaps" — and a wild thought darted through her mind — "perhaps he saw it and has warned me."

Her cheeks flushed and she moved restlessly. "Well, I accept his warning, if it was a warning. That is the end of it, if there was ever any beginning." She stood up, gazing absently at the cypress trees. She did not know Corinne was there until she turned and met her face to face. "Portia," said Corinne, after a short but severe scrutiny, "what is the matter? Has he been scolding you?"

"No," said Portia shortly, "he hasn't."

Corinne looked about her with a vague and desultory air, and remarked, "What a place for a lover's tête-à-tête."

"Lovers, lovers," exclaimed Portia, with unspeakable scorn. "That is all you think about."

"You have very good reason for not thinking about them," retorted Corinne. "You haven't any to think about. You were born for an old maid, anyway."

Portia made no reply, and looked indifferent; but Corinne had satisfied herself that she interrupted no tender love-dream.

The more Portia thought of it, the more certain she felt that he had meant to warn her, and a sense of indignation mingled with her mortification and shame. Instinctively she pitied Amy more than her bereaved lover; for she saw, though unconsciously, that "poor Amy" was no longer the actual influence in his life that he believed her to be, and probably had never been.

Then she firmly dismissed the subject, nor did she allow her thoughts to revert to it again until her head was on the pillow, when she said, "There now, there is an end to that piece of nonsense. Only a fleeting fancy; no reality in it; how can that do any harm?"

She, too, would live for noble things, and she prayed the Heavenly Father not to allow her to come into the kingdom quite empty-handed.

Soon a great wave of rest seemed to flow over her soul, and then another, more languorous still, and yet another, softly sweeping intelligent thought into illusive imagery, and Portia slept the sleep of the just.

CHAPTER XI.

HER NOVEL.

MR. ALLERTON returned Portia's manuscript without comment. "Well," she said, outwardly calm, but inly quaking, "what do you think of it? Do not be afraid to say it is a poor thing."

"I will not," he returned. "It is a poor thing."

Portia's eyes went down and her lips closed with a look of determined endurance.

"Now you are hurt," he exclaimed. "But, really, it is the kindest thing I could say. It would save you much mortification and wasted time if you would accept my judgment and give it up. Nearly every fairly gifted young person with no especial plan of life tries to become an author. They mistake the yeasty fermentations of a restless mind for the outcome of a peculiar sublimity of soul; and sometimes they sacrifice their whole lives to this illusion."

"But it was not that I thought myself a genius," faltered Portia, trying hard to appear indifferent; "I only want to make some money."

"My dear young lady, you wouldn't make enough in five years to keep you in stationery and pay the expressage on your fast returning manuscripts. Perhaps it will be some consolation to you to know that I was so foolish as to try it myself, once, and failed even more ignominiously than you, for I tried ever so many publishers, and lost over a year in the writing."

"Did you really?" exclaimed Portia, with a look of pleased surprise. "And you had to give it up?"

"The most of your story," said Allerton, evading the last question, and mine, too, doubtless, is simply stuff. Yet there are some good things in it, and" — observing the brightening of her eyes — "a great many faults."

"Could you specify some of the faults?"

"Well, you moralize too much. Here are five chapters, and what has happened? He has rescued her from a mad dog, and they have taken a walk in a grove. Then, all those Latin phrases sound school-girlish, and are quite useless. And why do you pretend to be a man?"

"Oh! publishers have more respect for a man's work, and would be more apt to take it, and to pay well for it, too."

"That is all a mistake. They take what they like, and they pay according to the marketable value of your work; any one could tell it was no man's work."

Portia did not dash her despised manuscript into the fire, after the approved dramatic fashion of genius; probably because she was not a genius. She dropped it into a draw and shut it out of sight.

"You will not try it again?"

"O, no!"

"That is wise," and he began to smile, as men always do when they have their own way. "You are a sensible girl" (they are apt to flatter a little, too), "and have a great many qualities much more admirable than the literary faculty of turning to account your own experiences and the experiences of your friends."

"Do you mean to make capital of your own feelings and the private affairs of your friends? Surely genius does not descend to such little ways."

"How else are they to find out the workings of the human heart?"

"By general observation; by experiences that are open to the world. I could never give my friends away after that ill fashion."

"You are far too conscientious and too amiable for a literary genius. They are invariably cross and cranky."

"I am not amiable at all," said Portia hastily. "I believe in total depravity. It is a continual struggle with me to be even tolerable."

As the weeks went by Allerton began to miss

the gay little airs and giddy flights with which she had hitherto entertained him. Her manner toward him now was grave and considerate, as to a person set apart for sad and serious things. But this pose of broken-spirited wreck was growing intolerably irksome to him. His grief had been keen and poignant at the time, and the memory of Amy's love was very soothing to his heart; especially amid the clash and jar of uncongenial surroundings; but he was quite resigned now, and entirely reconciled to the mysterious dispensation of Providence.

The opposition and open prejudice of the people around him was indescribably wearisome. Their ignorance of their own ignorance irritated him almost past endurance. But he managed to hold his tongue and kept a courageous front.

From Pinkney's books and papers, and stray impressions from the people who knew him best, Allerton had pieced out the meaning of that apparently purposeless life, and discovered in the bequest a sacred obligation. That he was menanced anonymously with cowardly threats of mobbing and burning, that even should he be successful, he would never be appreciated, made no difference in the weight of the obligation he felt to do what he could to refine, regenerate, and beautify this bit of the Master's vineyard so strangely thrust upon his hands.

One day he looked almost as weary and dis-

couraged as he felt. Portia recited miserably that day. For awhile he bore it patiently, but at last he suddenly dropped the book and said harshly, "There is no use in my trying to hear this lesson if you are going to think of something else."

Portia's glance dropped quickly to the floor, but she gave no outward sign of the shock she felt at his first harsh words. She, too, was learning the hard lesson of self-control.

The remainder of the lesson was recited in a steady mechanical tone, without further mental wanderings.

She did not guess that his sharp speech rankled as sorely in his mind as in hers. Nor did she suspect that only Corinne's premature entrance upon the scene prevented an humble apology.

Allerton had unintentionally discovered the different dispositions of the sisters. Behind the soft languor of Corinne's great blue eyes he found lurking a determined, willful, scheming spirit which concealed a personal motive behind everything she said or did. And now as she went on to tell him how anxious Portia was that he should succeed in everything, how she was doing the housework that Queen and Til might go to his school, though she naturally despised housework, and how she had even expostulated with Mr. Mallory for keeping his people at home, Allerton knew that Corinne had some purpose in hand.

"Aren't you mistaken?" he asked, with a quick

glance in Portia's direction. "I thought she didn't approve of the colored school."

Corinne laughed. "Have you, too, failed to fathom the difficult Portia? Has your vanity never suggested the possibility of any other influence beside the purely scientific?"

Portia threw down her brushes impetuously. "What an absurd cow! Five colors in her tail. I shall not put them." And she pushed the book away, overturning the ink-stand and precipitating its contents on the red and black table-cover.

Instead of calling a servant, as usual, and overwhelming Portia with condemnation, Corinne sweetly set about removing the stain. Portia resumed her drawing, paying no heed to what she had done. She well knew what a fiend of ill-temper she appeared in contrast with her sister's amiability, and did not suspect the extent of Allerton's mental vision, nor the fact that Corinne had just furnished him a clew to the purpose behind her unwonted confidences.

"You ought to be more careful, Portia," said Corinne, with a self-righteous air. "Don't glower so; it isn't becoming. What's that you're painting now?"

"Nothing!" said Portia gruffly.

But Corinne was too self-complacent to show any resentment. "Mammy Sara can't bear to see any of us 'dredgin' roun' like niggahs.'" Corinne was an admirable mimic. "'But dat wa' allus de

way wid Miss Po'tia,' she says. 'All de fine ruffles wouldn't 'fere wid heh makin' of mud pies. Now Miss C'rinne wa' allus a bawn lady. Wouldn't stir out de house widout a big sash on heh back; and wouldn't tech mud pies."

Allerton laughed, and Corinne sparkled on, serene in the consciousness of having, for once, squelched the irrepressible Portia.

"Who is that you're sketching, Portia? Why do you put that dirty spot under the nose? And see! the two sides are not alike; one is bigger than the other."

"That is perspective," said Portia, calmly working on.

Then Corinne began to inquire with great apparent interest into the success of the kindergarten system which Allerton had recently introduced into the colored school. Wasn't it a help? Did the children like it? and so forth. In her heart she despised the whole thing, but she could endure much for the sake of Allerton's attention and interest.

Suddenly she started forward. "Portia, you don't pretend to say that's me? It isn't a bit like me."

"Have I said it was like you?"

"Oh, oh! Portia, I'd stop if I couldn't do any better than that. It's horrid."

Portia went calmly on with her portrait in sepia, exaggerating every feature.

"Never mind, I'll pay you! Here's you."

She hastily drew a profile with a terrible nose, both eyes on one side and the ear behind.

"There's you. Look, Mr. Allerton, here's Portia."

Instead of appearing injured, Portia began to laugh. "Just like a critic's work, who sees faults in everything except his own execrable daub. That alone is perfect. Don't you see both eyes are on the same side?"

"Of course. Ain't both your eyes looking at me?"

"And the ear behind."

"Behind! It's at one side, just like yours."

There was no use in try to convince Corinne that her drawing had any faults.

When Mr. Allerton arose to go Corinne announced her intention of going along as far as the big gate. "Mamma wants us to walk every day, and one time is as good as another," and she went to get her hat.

Allerton came over and looked at Portia's drawing, as she mechanically touched it up here and there. For the first time he saw that busy hand slightly tremulous, and a sort of pitying tenderness filled his heart.

"I beg your pardon," he said humbly. "I have been a perfect bear this morning."

"Oh! never mind," a sudden light breaking over her face, while a carefully suppressed smile of pleasure deepened the dimples in her cheeks.

"It was all my fault. I know how trying I must be sometimes, and you have so much to worry you. I wish I might help you — might smooth things a little, sometimes."

For an instant he regarded the bright, appealing face lifted to his in a direct, but soft and modest gaze, then cast down his eyes. "Thank you," he said, somewhat formally, then, with a distant bow, hastily joined Corinne.

When he was rid of Corinne, Allerton fell into a brown study. What could he do to disenchant these two sentimental girls — sisters, rivals, and jealous of each other? He forgot all his other troubles in this new grievance.

Of Corinne and her frivolous fancies he thought little; but Portia, somehow he had strong faith in the steadfastness of Portia's affections. He sat down in his library and sternly inspected the events of the day, and of the day preceding, and of every day, in fact, which held a trace of Portia Ingram; and, after mature deliberation, he passed sentence of death on this dawning romance.

If she were rich — much may be forgiven riches, even in Boston. But Portia was poor, and her ambition was to work; to be practical, and useful, and common.

Involuntarily there arose in his mind as he sat staring at his book, the picture of this untaught girl making her difficult way through the unspeakable little intricacies of their ordinary social life.

The sympathetic discomfort of his kind father, the quiet dismay of Bertha, the hopeless resignation of his mother, the pitying patronage of Nina Crichton, the wonder of Flushing — poor Flushing! who had been halting so long between two Commonwealth Avenue belles — who had each made up her mind to have him, if she could do no better — and, worse than all, the covert ridicule of his accomplished, satirical friend, Mr. Lindley Prince Irwin.

No; he could not subject her to the misery of seeing herself despised, and it was equally impossible that he should forsake his own people.

Yes; it must end at once.

Yet, singularly enough, even while he yielded to the judgment of his relatives and friends, he experienced a sort of resentment against them, and scorn of the "narrow, provincial judgment" to which he submitted. And then he exclaimed, almost querulously, "If she had only been born and bred on Beacon Hill!"

CHAPTER XII.

ANTAGONISMS.

It was with vague dread and reluctance that Allerton went to the next lesson. How was he to change from kindness to coldness without wounding her feelings? He was not sorry to find them all out on the veranda; but his satisfaction vanished when he saw Mallory there, too. Mallory's presence affected him like an evil spirit.

He was seated beside Portia, criticising her drawing in his easy, off-hand manner, keeping up a running fire of banter and raillery. Blanche hastened to place a chair for the new comer; Portia scarcely glanced up from her drawing to return his greeting; Mallory nodded coldly, but did not alter his position. "I'm here," called Corinne from the hammock at the other end of the veranda. "I'm here, if you want to see me; and you ought, for I've got on a new frock. I'm the countess Olivia, and I've been defending you against your enemies. Portia doesn't like you any more, but I think you much more lovable than Mr. Mallory."

"I think there must be some mistake about that," said Mallory, in his slow, musical tones. "You don't know me; that's the trouble. To know me is to love me."

"That's what Portia thinks," said Corinne.

"Do you?" bending down to catch the quick, startled glance.

"Do I what?" frowning at him.

"What do you think of me? I have been wanting to know this long while, but could never get up the courage to ask."

Portia cast another swift glance into the handsome, smiling face, as if to refresh her memory, and then returned to her work. "I don't know. That is, I think you are rather good-looking," she said, with evident reluctance. "Phew!" said the parrot, who was swinging overhead; then he resumed his occupation of chewing up a wooden clothes-pin, glaring at Mallory with his evil yellow eye.

Mallory appreciated the difficulties of the girl's honesty and exhibited his white teeth in a bland smile. "Oh! I was convinced of that before. What I wanted was your opinion of me — my disposition, character and so forth."

"I have none," said Portia, looking relieved. "I never knew what to think of you. I have often wondered, but could never make out."

"Well, there's comfort in that. I am intricate, abstruse, complicated. I require severe, extensive, protracted study; that's evident."

Then he resumed his criticisms of her drawings in a ludicrous, priggish manner evidently meant as an imitation of Allerton.

Whenever these two were thrown together the struggle to restrain their antipathy was plainly apparent. Mallory seldom recognized his enemy's presence otherwise than by a cool nod. He addressed him only when it was absolutely unavoidable, and then as one far beneath him, scarcely worthy his notice.

And Allerton, though always studiously polite and courteous, could not restrain the bitterness and contempt with which he saw the open satisfaction Mallory's presence seemed to confer on the whole household.

Evidently the mischievous girls had plotted to bring the two young men into direct contact, at any cost. When everything else had failed, Blanche broached the sore subject of the colored school.

Had Mr. Allerton found the darky as capable as he anticipated? Did he think they would ever be as bright intellectually as the white people?

"A higher social atmosphere and more teachers," Allerton replied, "was all that was needed to make the colored people as good and capable citizens as the white. When education becomes more general, and they are allowed more active part in the government, then the elevation of the race, and the prosperity of the South, is assured."

Portia had gone into the library after her books, and as both Corinne and Blanche were engaged with Allerton, Mallory had no alternative but to sit there and hear this prophecy of a millenium in the South in consequence of negro culture and legislation. But he did not listen long in silence.

"That time will never come," he exclaimed aggressively. "We don't propose to be ruled by negroes, nor to be prompted in our duties by Yankees who really care nothing for the darkies only as tools. If they care so much, why don't they appoint them to office in their own States?"

"There are comparatively few colored people in the North, and these freely exercise all the political rights granted them by law. Why should we devote so much time and thought to their improvement if we care nothing for them?" Allerton spoke quietly, but his eyes flashed.

"Why?" laughed Mallory, "I know of no reason unless there's a chance to make something by it. The North was dying to have them free. They lost nothing by it. But now that they are free, are they willing to spend as much as we lost by them to make their freedom a blessing? No. They are not even willing to have them as hired servants unless they find them entirely to their own satisfaction. Many are starving and stealing now for want of work; many are going astray for want of friendly advice; and the people who were so wild to get them out of the homes they

were in, are not willing to put up with their faults and short-comings as servants even, much less treat them as the equals they declare them to be."

"That may be true in some instances; there are selfish, heartless people everywhere; but all the freed slaves are not fit to be taken into the intimacy of household service. A bad servant may be worse than a pestilence. As for making anything, I gain nothing except the ill-will of the white people. Suppose no one taught these people turned loose here among you? In a few years the South would be unendurable to decent, peace-loving citizens."

"And who turned them loose here among us, pray? There never was so much thieving and knavery of all sorts as now. That is one of the results of this ignorant, hypocritical movement for elevating the poor negro."

"It is useless, of course, to try to convince a Southerner of purity of motive in a Yankee," said Allerton coldly.

"Because we know them so well," Mallory retorted. "Read the history of Massachusetts! Some of your old Pilgrim fathers had consciences as keen, and narrow, and deadly as Italian poinards. How long has it been since William Lloyd Garrison was dragged through the streets of Boston with a rope around his body, because he thought the slaves ought to be free? And wasn't Prudence Crandall mobbed in Connecticut for teaching a

negro school? Of the Salem witchcraft horrors, in which your Boston fathers played a part as infamous as that of Robespierre, it is needless to speak."

"Kentucky, of course, knows nothing of mobbing, and burning, and hanging," suggested Allerton, with quiet sarcasm.

"We have never claimed to be anything else but howlers and whoopers," returned Mallory, "and never will so long as Kentucky has the honor of being the world's distillery."

"The Puritans were always very religious people, weren't they?" inquired Corinne, fearing that this animated discussion was about to come to a close.

Mallory laughed. "I don't know how far back they date, I am sure. Malvolio, the Countess Olivia's snivelling, mouthing steward, was a Puritan; and that same croaking spirit isn't out of them yet. Because they are abstemious they think there should be no more cakes and ale."

"The Huguenots of South Carolina, the Roman Catholics of Maryland, and even your pious Virginia cavaliers — of which Kentucky formed a fragment — have all left tracks behind them they would gladly efface," said Allerton, who was beginning to lose the cool self-possession which had served to irritate Mallory even more than his words.

But a soothing, "There! there!" from Corinne, and a peal of laughter from Blanche, put an end to the discussion.

Mallory, whose nature was more facile, was the first to recover his air of easy good-humor. His attitude toward the entire feminine world was suavity and graciousness personified, and when he turned to Portia, as she came out with her books under her arm, with a flattering speech, delivered in his most silvery tones and blandest manner, Allerton mentally apostrophized him as an "artful scoundrel!" In his eyes, the suavity was all "blarney," the graciousness "insidiousness," and the motive behind it "despicable vanity."

And Portia! he need trouble himself no more on her account. What weak, impressionable things were girls.

Here he was again collecting an audience to interfere with his independence. Even here he could not live his own life. Did people carry their shackles about with them?

He hurried through with the lessons, not pausing to make new excursions into the lofty domains of science or literature, nor to recount events of foreign travel, as he frequently did — especially the discomforts and mishaps — the interest always heightening with the extremity of the narrative.

As he hastened down the avenue a strong desire to escape for a season from this atmosphere of strife and antagonism, took hold on him, and suddenly he determined to go back and excuse himself from the lessons for an indefinite time. He had reached the big iron gate, and there was half a

mile of avenue to retrace; but that made no difference, with freedom at the end.

As he hurriedly retraced his steps the glimmer of a light dress among the shrubbery caught his eye, and presently he saw, with a flash of pleasure, that it was Portia. She did not care so much for Mr. Mallory's society, then.

Struck with a certain intensity in her attitude he paused and inquired, "What is it you see?"

"I was trying to make out," and she pointed into the shubbery. "I think it is a snake." As if in reply the grayish mass slowly uncoiled, stretched to its full length, and began to crawl leisurely off.

With a hasty glance to the right and left, Portia snatched up a small stone, the only missile in sight, and aimed a blow at its head. It missed, and his snakeship was escaping into the thicket when Portia rushed forward, seized its tail and quickly lashed the creature to death against a tree.

"Well done," ejaculated Allerton. "I doubt if I could have done that myself."

"Ugh! I feel like Lady Macbeth, only worse," exclaimed Portia with a shudder, scrubbing her hand diligently with some leaves. "But I said I would kill the next snake I saw."

With a glance of disgust at the dead reptile she turned and walked rapidly toward the house.

"I neglected to tell you," he said, keeping at her side, "that I should not be able to come again for a couple of weeks. I came back to tell you."

"Thank you," said Portia, slackening her pace.

"Perhaps your sisters would hear your lessons. Then you would lose no time."

"Yes," she said quickly, under her breath.

There was nothing to detain him; they were in the carriage road now, his way lay in one direction, hers in another, but still he lingered. He would not see her for a long while, and he thought of many suggestions in regard to her studies. And then, Portia had not even glanced at him yet. He could never feel sure of her mood until he read it in her eyes; and he feared he might be leaving an unpleasant impression.

And so he went on talking — she would look at him presently — of her studies, the beauty of the day, and many high, poetic things.

How was it that the direction of their thoughts was so often heavenward? Spiritual things had never seemed so real, so tangible, as since he had been teaching Portia. "How can one love nature and have no belief in a future life?" he said. "The wondrous transformation of the seed into a great tree, bearing flowers and fruit, speaks so plainly of the resurrection of human souls to infinitely larger, grander life."

"Oh! I hope we will be something like we are here," and then Portia looked at him wistfully.

There was no confusion, no self-consciousness in her look. It was a clear, quiet, straightforward beam; yet Allerton shivered slightly, and with

difficulty withdrew his gaze. Profound feeling has, at times, an almost leaden unconsciousness. Recognition and analysis comes afterward.

"This world is such a grand place," she continued, with a rapt expression. "Sometimes I can almost feel our mad, onward whirl through space; almost see the vast infinitudes stretching on and on through all eternity."

"But the difficulties of this life, the limitations" — and there was a strange sadness in his tone — make a belief in one somewhat higher indispensable to our resignation to present ills."

"Yes," and her smile deepened; "that is the most delightful thought of all. We are just beginning to live."

"What a relief! to be free from care about what we shall eat and wherewithal we shall be clothed," he continued, conscious of a subtle intoxication against which he struggled in vain. "To see, to speak and to feel without effort or fear of misapprehension."

Allerton crossed the pastures, he scarcely knew how, as thoroughly conscious of the trend of the young girl's nebulous emotions as if the innermost depths of her heart lay bare before him. There was a strange glamour over everything in which for the time he revelled, notwithstanding his heart whispered him of its fleeting, transitory nature.

He accomplished a great deal that day, and turned to his library at night as to a haven of rest.

Everything was arranged for his comfort. The student lamp was on the table, lighted, his easy-chair drawn up beside it, his dressing-gown within easy reach, his frugal supper on the small table — all as he wished.

He ate little, and throwing himself into a chair, took up a book. He could fix his mind on nothing. His heart beat quickly. He could see a girlish figure moving about the room, now gazing wistfully at him, and now smiling joyously.

How calmly the innocent eyes looked into his, all unconscious of the revelations they were making. How sweetly that little fleck of sunshine rested on the short, curved upper lip, and the lovely pinkish bloom on the tender cheek —

What folly! He threw down the book and hurried out into the dusky night, to walk persistently up and down the long avenue, and at last to lose himself in dreams.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE TRACK.

ALLERTON stayed away three weeks instead of two. He had been busy, he told Portia. She accepted his explanation serenely, suggesting a still longer vacation.

He said No, unless she was tired.

O no! She was not tired, but thought he might be.

He failed to say whether he was tired or not, and the next time he came Corinne smilingly informed him that Portia was away on a visit. She had gone to Woodstock, and Mr. Mallory and Katie Witherspoon had gone with her.

"Then I need not come over Thursday?" he said, with a sudden unwelcome twinge of regret.

"O yes! Portia won't stay long."

As he insisted on returning immediately, Corinne brought her hat and walked with him as far as the big gate.

Corinne was pretty and friendly and interesting, and he sometimes wondered why her beauty, her

amiable manner and her practical good sense — for she had that, for all her flippant ways — gave him no real satisfaction. And why, also, her growing partiality for his society only increased his distaste for hers.

Fortunately, for the peace of mind of his susceptible feminine acquaintances, Allerton's negative qualities rather over-balanced his personal advantages. If the clear dark eyes had been as ready to admire and approve as to criticise and condemn, the damage committed might have been grievous. But his firm, clear-cut features expressed more severity than complacence, and presented rather a discouraging façade to a timid admirer. He was the sort of man that women admire at a safe distance.

His simplicity and earnestness won him a few real friends. Yet had he been more absorbed in self-culture, and less concerned about the spiritual well-being of his neighbors, had he taken life more easily, his popularity would have been greatly enhanced.

There is nothing more admired in this world than the good-natured selfist who goes clambering upward over the heads of his neighbors, throwing his smiles to the right and the left, yet helping none. He succeeds grandly, and the friendly crowd left behind cheers heartily. But he has passed by the most precious things in life: the gratitude of the unlucky whom he has used in-

stead of helped, the dear love of the "high-born," whom "the truth has made free," and, more than all, that profound serenity of soul with which the faithful servant goes home to meet his Master. His eyes are shortsighted, worldly eyes, and his life, after all, is a failure.

After this fashion had Corinne planned her life. To get the most possible pleasure or profit out of life was her creed. Her fervent belief in her own importance was well-calculated to impress those about her with the feeling that her prospects and her welfare were the things of chief consequence, both here and hereafter. Blanche and Portia had been taught to give up to her; the servants thought they had to wait on "Miss C'rinne" if nothing else went on, though Corinne never troubled herself about their comfort, or cared in the least whether they were ever paid or not, and her mother made all her plans with reference to Corinne's comfort or advantage.

It had never occurred to Corinne that there were people who cared nothing whatever about her and her petty aims, and the inner anger with which Allerton received her smiling announcement that Portia was still absent, was utterly inconceivable to her. Was she not there? Portia was nothing; who cared whether Portia were here or there? And when he persisted in going at once, though she assured him that she was looking for Portia every minute, she brought her hat and walked

with him to the big gate, lecturing him on his tiresome devotion to business.

When two weeks had passed without any word of explanation or apology, Allerton began to speculate seriously over it, and his final conclusion was that her mother was at the bottom of it.

That Mrs. Ingram entertained for him more hostility than friendliness, that she had regarded him from the first with prejudice and disfavor, he knew, and cared little. Blanche, though a good friend to her friends, had but a narrow range of sympathies, and Corinne's selfishness, like "the dead fly in the ointment," spoiled all the effect of her flattering preference; but Portia, the bare possibility of shallowness or dissimulation or deceit in Portia, sent a cold shiver to his heart, forcing on him a sudden recognition of the extent his belief in her had gone toward reconciling him to his uncongenial surroundings.

He was aware that his attitude toward Portia had changed. He felt now a distinct desire for her approval, quite different from the old careless friendliness. The lessons had become a needful daily tonic, stimulating his mind to altitudes of thought otherwise unattainable. Yet Portia bore no resemblance to the ideal inhabiting his vague imperspicuous visions — a creature of lofty and noble soul, possessed of no weaknesses, no errors, from whom, in the flesh, he would have shrank in dismay.

At last he found Portia in her old place on the veranda beneath the jessamine vines, and, to his unspeakable disgust, Mallory seated beside her. A shock of keen dislike shot through him at the sight. He could hear nothing of their conversation, but their attitude suggested the most amicable relations.

Mallory took no notice of his arrival, but Portia arose at once and led the way into the library.

"Was it a psychological debate or a flirtation that I had the misfortune to interrupt?" he asked, conscious that his question was neither well-bred nor diplomatic. But he was out of patience with Portia.

"Neither," returned Portia, with a look of disapproval.

"It is to be hoped," he continued, still more irritably, "that his morals are no worse than his manners."

"I have found no fault in either," replied Portia warmly. "He seems to me both kind and courteous, and he is certainly generous. No matter how much he disliked a person, you would never hear him breathe a word against him in his absence."

As Allerton listened to these words of praise his heart throbbed with jealous pain. This was selfishness in its purity. He knew that he had Portia's friendship and confidence, and had he not said he wanted nothing more? Yes; he was like the dog in the manger, who neither wanted the bone himself nor was willing that another should have it.

Yet there were so few whose friendship was worth having, so few who returned your regard in sincerity, making no selfish use of their power over you! That was why, he elaborately explained to himself, that he was so unwilling to share this one genuine friendship with that vain and selfish man, even were it possible that she could hold together in her heart two human beings so antagonistic.

He was alone here, too; far from his own people; that was another reason why he placed such stress on Portia's friendship. It was his all. He was unconscious of the intentness of the scrutiny to which he subjected her as these thoughts went trooping through his mind, until Portia suddenly lifted her eyes to his face with a look of defiance that was absolutely startling.

"That fellow has made her believe I am in love with her!" was his first resentful thought, and he recalled the fact that he had once told her she reminded him of Amy. Well, he could easily relieve her mind on that point.

"Did you have a pleasant visit?" he inquired at the end of the recitation.

"Yes, very pleasant," indifferently.

"Protracted holidays seldom increase one's relish for study," he said in a disapproving tone.

It had not interfered with hers, she answered. Then she brought her sketch-book in which were various studies of trees and flowers, which he ad-

mitted were "fair." Some of them were her own work, and some were Mallory's. Their intimacy, it seemed, had gained in proportion to her progress in other things.

He did not find Portia where he left her three weeks ago. Her confiding, childlike candor was gone; she was reserved in look and tone. The mystery, the intensity of womanhood had begun, he thought regretfully. "Did you go away on your account or mine?" he inquired.

"I felt a little dull," she said, after a brief pause, "and I thought you needed a rest, too."

"I might have been more reconciled," he returned, "if I had understood your intention. I did not particularly need a two-mile walk every other day."

"Didn't you get my note?" looking at him in surprise.

"Not yet," smiling sarcastically.

"That is just like Corinne! She promised faithfully to send my note over by Tom as soon as he came in from the field. I thought you would be glad to have me off your hands for awhile. And Corinne let you waste all that time and tire yourself out, all for nothing?"

"Well, perhaps not exactly for nothing." And he laughed slightly.

"I know," a faint red overspreading her cheek, "Corinne likes company; and what Corinne likes she does not hesitate to take, if she can. If the

world was not made for her, she is sure it ought to have been. She thinks we were all — papa, and mamma, and the whole set of us — designed for her especial use and benefit."

Allerton failed to reprove her this time, for showing up the faults of a relative.

Faced with her false trust Corinne laughed, and, as usual, began to defend herself. "I didn't say I would send the note. I said I wouldn't forget it, and I didn't. I had no idea Portia would stay. We could never induce her to stay away a whole day before, and it was real lonesome. I don't see what Mr. Allerton has to complain of, for he needed the recreation; and I'm sure his time wasn't so badly lost as he thinks."

He forgave her readily, and soon afterward Portia heard them laughing merrily as they went down the avenue together.

"How light a thing is friendship," thought Portia, as she returned to her books, "especially a man's. But two weeks away, and already he thinks more of Corinne. He is tired of me, I suppose, or he has discovered I am not the sort of friend he wants. Now I had done nothing, yet he glared at me as if I had done him some serious wrong. Well, I was a sincere friend, at any rate, and that Corinne will never be."

Allerton crossed the pastures in an unenviable frame of mind. He felt that a crisis of some sort was at hand, and to leave it to chance was not in

accordance with his ideas of dignity and steadfastness of character. He must come to a decision; the sooner the better. But what decision?

At last a happy thought struck him. Why not lay the matter before Prince Irwin? Who had better judgment? Who more wise in his day and generation? As a man of the world, skilled in the world's ethics, Irwin would doubtless see the whole situation at a glance, as a champion chess-player who pauses a moment beside two players. He would see the relative value and position of each figure, and all possible danger ahead.

He wrote at once, a long letter, full of the Ingram young ladies, but purposely in the disinterested tone of one absolutely free from all danger of heart-entanglement, except by deliberate purpose. It was the only way, he decided, to obtain an unbiased opinion. If he betrayed undue interest, Irwin, with a possible future in view, would feel constrained to express himself in approving terms. If it should ever come to be a case of conscience, Allerton felt he could trust himself to do the right thing.

When he went to post his letter he found the village in great commotion over a shooting affray that had occurred in one of the drinking saloons.

The murderer, a tall, fine-looking fellow, stood leaning carelessly against the saloon counter, a desperate pallor on his young face, both hands in his pockets, each on a pistol ready for further

murder if any one attempted his arrest. "Poor weak egoist!" thought Allerton. "He thinks to be called 'the bully of Blank County' is a thing to be proud of, not knowing how base and low a thing it really is." His friends were there, ready to go on his bond, to testify temporary insanity, or anything that legal advice might suggest.

"He'll not even be arrested," said Mr. Decker. "Or if he is, his friends will fit up a soft place for him and lionize him and clear him. There's no chance of ridding this county of cut-throats until the officers of the law are made to know and do their duty."

"And there's no chance of that until whiskey and whiskey makers and whiskey drinkers are swept out of the State," said Allerton.

"Oh! come," said Decker, "some of the best people in the State make whiskey, and drink it, too."

"Nevertheless the dragon is doomed. Refinement, culture, Christianity, are all against it. If there are any good people in the sinking ship they would better get out of it. Why should Kentucky bear the affliction of this pestilence? As a source of revenue? Whiskey impoverishes, incapacitates, throws upon the public a thousand, where it enriches one, crowding mad-houses and penitentiaries, and blackening the name of the State."

Allerton was on his way to a temperance meeting. He found the Ingrams there, each provided

with an escort, and Portia so fashionably dressed he scarcely knew her. She was talking and laughing so flippantly with Crugar and another fellow, and appeared so unlike the Portia he knew and admired, that he went away congratulating himself that his odd freak of fancy was over. How glad he was he had not betrayed himself to Irwin. How Irwin would laugh if he should ever know.

As he went buoyantly down the street, Decker came out of the office, staggering slightly, and called after him: "See here, Allerton, you'd better look out for Crugar when you come back. He's had a remittance from home, and he and some of the other fellows are out on a lark. He's looking for you, with two or three pistols in his pockets. Crugar isn't a bad fellow, but when he's drinking he's a little quarrelsome."

"Thank you," said Allerton, observing the unsteadiness of Mr. Decker's attitude. "Which way did he go? He might injure himself."

"Yes, he might, and he might injure somebody else, too. You see Crugar's father — a rich whiskey dealer in L——, you know — sent him down here out of the way of temptation. But there's no place on earth where a fellow like that won't find temptation. It's the aim of his life to find irresistible temptation. Crugar's a fine marksman; could shoot out a bird's eye at a hundred yards."

"Much obliged to you, Decker," and Allerton turned away. "I'll try and keep out of his way."

On his way home he met the party in question, wrangling boisterously together, pausing occasionally for a general fist-fight. Not wishing to come in contact with them, Allerton withdrew into the shadow of some bushes on the roadside until they passed by. But Crugar was not with them.

He felt some uneasiness as he thought of the young man's two pistols and his possible state of body and mind. But he reached home without seeing him.

Then he began to reproach himself for his indifference to the fate of an unlucky fellow-creature. He grew more and more anxious and uneasy, until at last he threw down his book, drew on his boots and coat and went out again into the night.

As he walked along the railroad track, used only from the transportation of whiskey from the great Bumpus distillery, he heard the faint rumble of an oncoming car, and was about to leave the track when he saw just ahead of him a spotted object which in the dim moonlight he took to be a cow.

"Get up, old simpleton!" he called, throwing a stick at the object. But a succession of missiles failed to produce the slightest effect on the "old simpleton." Then he hurried forward with the intention of administering a few admonitory kicks. He stopped in utter astonishment. It was Crugar.

There he lay, his head on the track, his boots beside him, his coat and hat hanging on a bush

near by. He had retired, in his own mind, to the peaceful repose of his own couch. Always a neat, methodical fellow about his clothes when in his right senses, he seemed still to have had them on his mind.

Wrathful feelings stirred within Allerton's breast. He had a mind to let the fool die. It would rid the world of one more pest, and perhaps save some silly woman from a brute of a husband.

No time for reflection, with the headlight gleaming, the dull roar growing momentarily louder! Not for his life could he have left Crugar there.

As he hurled him from the track the engine's baleful eye flared full in his face, and he felt its hot breath as it passed.

"Sto' tha'," growled Crugar in thick tones. "Can't yo' le' a fel'a' 'lone?"

Allerton dragged him into the retirement of a fence corner and there dropped him, with very little regard to his comfort or his clothes. Then he collected his scattered wardrobe and piled it beside him, and so left him sleeping.

In the cool dawn Crugar woke. Rubbing his eyes open he staggered to his feet; then he took a cursory view of the situation.

"How came this bur in my hair?" he muttered, as he picked one off his head. "No burs in this fence-corner, and that long track from the railroad — must 'a' been dragged here."

He twisted himself into a position furnishing a

view of his rear, and an angry frown broke over his face.

"What'd the villain mean by lettin' a fellow's legs drag in that inhuman manneh? It was Allerton, I wager a million. Wish I'd 'a' seen him! Why couldn't he 'a' done the job in a decent manneh while he was about it? Here's my new breeches not fit to be seen!"

Having brushed his apparel sufficiently he struck off toward Athens, not much impressed by anything except the dirt on his new breeches.

The incident was never mentioned by either, but Crugar had little trouble in verifying his suspicions as to the author of the injury his new breeches had sustained. But in consideration of the counter indebtedness, he waived all efforts at revenge. Crugar was too high-toned a fellow to misuse a man who had saved his life, even if he had done the job in a slovenly sort of manner.

CHAPTER XIV.

K. K. K.

THE sight of the colored children strolling homeward every evening with school-books under their arms was too much for the inflammable tempers of the Athenian loafers, and they made up their minds to put a stop to it.

"You could see he despised us the first time he sot eyes on us," said one. "He's been through college, an' we hain't."

"He thinks us a lot o' tame cats, like ez not," said another.

"He sha'n't hector over me, the Yankee dog!" and so forth.

Consequently for the past three months Allerton had been annoyed by mysterious scrawls containing threats of dire vengeance if the colored school was not closed. He paid no attention to these, and finally one morning the brief mandate, "Klose the skule. K. K. K.", was found fastened to the door with a dirk.

Allerton knew that the outlawed "Ku Klux

Klan" (the drop of wild blood left over from the war) had been disbanded several years ago, and whatever mischief was now committed in its name rested with the perpetrators, who shielded themselves in vain behind an empty name. He commanded teacher and scholars to pay no attention to this mysterious threat.

The third morning afterward the schoolhouse was found burned to the ground.

On the Monday following Allerton had one of his cabins fitted up with benches, and the school resumed its hum of business. As he sat balancing accounts at the close of the day there floated in through the open windows the dismal, though not unmusical chant: "I believes in Zion: Yes, I believes in Zion: Oh, yes, I believes in Zion!" And a feeling of thankfulness touched his heart as he thought of the good he had been permitted to do these poor people.

Before the close of the week the cabin was in ashes.

Allerton was furious. He appealed to the local authorities, who said they could do nothing. Then he appealed to the Governor. The result was the discomfiture of the local authorities and the reopening of the school in an unused schoolhouse on the outskirts of the village.

At night a squad of soldiers were secreted inside. A few nights afterwards a party of masked men were fired upon from within while attempting to

set fire to the building. The next day several loafers were missed from their wonted haunts, and it was afterward found that some of them were suffering from wounds "accidentally inflicted while hunting."

Both Mr. Ingram and Judge Pirtle urged Allerton to leave The Oaks, and make them an indefinite visit. Though touched by this proof of friendship from the two men he most liked and respected, Allerton insisted on remaining in his own house.

He secured a guard, and Claxton warned the negroes in the cabins to be on the alert. As an attack was not expected the first night, the whole house was soon wrapped in profound slumber.

It was then that Fate, usually depicted as heralding her intentions by premonitory warnings, manifested her predilection for the serenest hour of the twenty-four in which to make her descent.

In the silent midnight Sylvia awoke and sat up, trembling with fear. Wasn't that a footstep creeping stealthily past her door?

Tremblingly she lighted the lamp, and slipping on a loose wrapper, cautiously opened the door. She saw no one, but as she hurried down the long hall, she suddenly became aware of a moving mass of indistinct figures intervening between herself and the sanctuary towards which her footsteps were bent—her mother's room. At the same time there was a light sound behind her, and turning,

Sylvia at once found herself confronted by a hideous mask.

"If you scream," he said, thrusting a pistol close to her face, "I'll blow your brains out! But if you'll be quiet and show me that blamed Yankee's room, I'll not hurt you."

With lips tightly closed and wild startled eyes, poor Sylvia retreated backward before the advancing horror until she touched the wall behind her, and there stood a statue of terror.

"Come," he whispered, "if you'll tell me, nary hair o' your head'll be touched, on my sacred word an' honor! — O hang it! Say, Tom," beckoning down the long hall, "come and see what you can do with this miserable little fool!"

"Captain," said the new-comer, "it's that blamed false face scars her, an' no wonder!" And with that he tore off his own mask and stood before her, a handsome, affable-looking young man. "We've called to see the Boston gentleman," in a soft, ingratiating tone, "on a little matter of business. If you'd be kind enough to show us the proppeh doah to knock at, we needn't rouse the whole house."

"What do you want with him?" asked Sylvia, suddenly ceasing to tremble while the color came back to her face. Since it was a good-looking young man and no mysterious horror, that was another matter.

"Important business," he murmured vaguely. "Only a minute, we won't hurt him."

"We're not thieves nor robbers, madam!" exclaimed the captain impatiently. "We're a reg'lar organized body of respectable citizens. We punish only them that deserves it. We mean to keep the carpet-bagger an' the nigger from takin' this country, sence the Gov'nment won't do it."

"And we simply desire to interview the Boston gentleman on the subject," added the other blandly.

"Then," said Sylvia, her black eyes flashing, "hadn't you bettah come in the daytime to see Mr. Allerton?"

In the meantime a crowd of masked figures had collected around the intrepid girl, who, now that she fully realized the situation, stood firmly erect, holding the lamp in her hand. The hall seemed alive with strange creatures, but Sylvia looked only at the two with whom she was conversing. These were men, she was sure of that; the others might be demons, for aught she knew.

"See here!" said the captain, glaring at her. "D'you want us to smash every door in the house? I'd as soon give Claxton a thrashin' as not."

"Do go away!" exclaimed Sylvia earnestly. "They're all prepared for you. There's a lot of soldiers armed to the teeth. Some of you would be killed, sure! Make haste, and go very quietly, won't you?" looking confidingly into the young man's face. "I don't want to see any of you killed."

"Confound the long-tongued Delilah!" hissed the captain under his breath. "What're y'uall standin' here fer, like a pack o' gapin' idyots? Smash in that doqr!"

"Come!" said the young man, turning to the others with an air of command. "The rest of you can stay here, and rouse this peaceable household like a passel o' sneak thieves, if you want to; but I'm going."

A number of the party were merely wild young prodigals out on a lark. They had no grudge against Allerton, beyond a vague resentment of that quiet courtesy and self-restraint which in some way made him seem their superior, except possibly in mere brute strength. The most of them knew Sylvia as Claxton's pretty daughter, but beauty was no uncommon thing, and none of them had given her a thought after she had passed out of their sight. But courage and forbearance under threatening circumstances were not common; were, indeed, exceptional and unknown to these young men, and they were captivated by it.

"Go, go!" she cried with a vehement gesture of dismissal, and then suddenly sped down the long hall and tumbled into her mother's room with a loud cry that roused the whole house.

Claxton sprang up with a shout. He gave the great bell in the tree outside his window a loud jangle, and rushed out into the hall. In a second the house exhibited its strength and temper; the

whole force were out firing after the scattering marauders.

In vain the huge captain cursed and swore; the young men had all followed Tom's example and made off, and the others, fearing for their own safety, had followed.

"We're not going to fight, Claxton," said one, as he made for the door. Often, when tipsy, Claxton had amused them with his absurd remarks, for which they held him in grateful remembrance.

"Halt!" roared Claxton, who had no such considerations for them. But no one considered it expedient to halt, except the furious captain, who made a rush at Allerton as he appeared unarmed in the doorway.

Claxton was on him in a moment, but with a desperate wrench he freed himself, cleared the stairway at one bound, and made his exit, wildly cursing his men.

The negroes came trooping in with crow-bars and axes and pitch-forks, much disappointed that there was to be no fight. Two or three who had old rifles and shot-guns struck out on their trail, followed by the remonstrances of the old men and the loud entreaties of their feminine relatives, who fluttered confusedly about the yard like a colony of ants whose nest had been invaded.

The men held a council of war. Some were for following them at once, but the majority favored waiting until to-morrow. "Yes," exclaimed Clax-

ton, "and to-morrow they will all be scattered to the four winds, sauntering about the streets, and over the fields as peaceable as lambs. The scounderels ought to be hung!"

"They ought to be punished," said Allerton, "but it would be folly for us to try to take fifty or sixty desperadoes who are now hiding in the woods, doubtless waiting for us to come out."

The negro men who had gone out soon returned, much alarmed. "De pissle ball jes' whissle by my yeah!" exclaimed one, the white of his eyes gleaming in the black of his face like electric lights on a dark night.

"Sylvia," said her father suddenly, "how did you get through the hall among all those men?"

"Ran through," said Sylvia saucily. "How else do you think I could get through?" As beneath Corinne's flippancy there was a strain of sound practical sense, so in Sylvia's volatile nature there was a heroic vein, apparent only under painful stress. Now that the danger was passed, the childish levity returned to the surface in full force.

"Did they say nothing to you?"

"Why, yes; they said a good deal. One of 'em said he'd give you a good thrashin' first chance he got."

"Sylvia! You wa'n't out there all alone with them ruffians!" cried her mother in holy horror.

"They wasn't ruffians. One of 'em was the handsomest fellow I've seen for a long while."

"Come, Sylvia," said her father sternly, "stop your foolishness, and tell what you've got to tell."

And Sylvia, nothing loath, began at the beginning and related the whole of her adventure, adding that she hoped they wouldn't ever catch that good-looking young man.

"Why didn't you call me?" exclaimed Allerton angrily. "I heard a rustle out there and, as I was sure I heard your voice, I thought possibly you had the toothache and your mother was hunting something for it. I wouldn't venture out, for fear of finding myself *de trop*."

"That is exactly what you would have done," laughed Sylvia. "I believe that big black-haired man they called captain would have torn you in pieces."

"See here, Sylvia," said her father, "I don't want you ever to do a thing like that again. Some o' that gang are perfect desperadoes. It's a wonder you got off as easy as you did."

"I wasn't afraid of the hoodlums. I advised 'em to go away, Mr. Bray, and come another day, and you see they went. They were afraid not to!" Sylvia found this interpretation of their sudden departure so irresistibly funny that she burst into a merry peal of laughter.

"Good land, Sylvia!" said her mother, laying a solemn hand on her daughter's shoulder, "if you evah do sech a thing as that ag'in, I'll whip you, if it's the last thing I do. D'you heah!"

A whole week passed peacefully by. The soldiers were gone. Local authority had ceased to deplore "lawless hostility," and the "indiscriminate use of fire-arms," and the whole affair seemed about forgotten.

At about two o'clock one night Mrs. Claxton stood over her daughter, shaking her vigorously:

"Sylvia, Sylvia! Get up this minute! D'you heah?"

Sylvia sighed heavily, and turned over, evidently too accustomed to this formula to be aroused by it.

"Get up, I say! D'you want to be burnt up alive?"

"O, ma! I don't want any breakfast," moaned Sylvia. "What you gettin' up this time o' night for?"

"There's a fire, I tell you! The old kitchen's about gone, and they're trying to save the new one and the pantries. If the wind rises the house may go, too."

Sylvia's eyes were opened wide enough now. She began to dress hurriedly.

"All the neighbors are here," continued Mrs. Claxton. "You must 'a' slep' like a log, not to heah the bell."

"Oh! the bell," exclaimed Sylvia impatiently. "I never pay any attention to the old bell. It's always ringin' at unurthly houahs."

"A corneh o' the v'randa was afire, but Mr. Allerton found it out befo' much damage was

done. Poah fellow! I don't b'lieve he sleeps at all!"

"Why don't he shoot one or two of 'em, then?" exclaimed Sylvia. "That would put an end to it. I wish I had a pistol — wouldn't I peppeh em!" and Sylvia's black eyes snapped portentously.

Outside all was noise and confusion. As Sylvia, with a crimson shawl thrown over her head, flitted restlessly from group to group, one powerful figure caught her attention, and she watched his movements with vague dread and suspicion. No, she could not be mistaken. It was the captain of the mob. "It is not to put out the fire he is here," was her intuitive conviction as he passed her with a pail of water.

As he vanished around the corner of the house Sylvia touched the arm of the person nearest to her and said: "The leader of the masqueraders is here. He's just turned the corner of the house. He ought to be arrested right now."

"Yes, certainly," said the man, turning on her a smiling face, "he ought, and I'll tend to it myself."

Sylvia started back in alarm. It was the good-looking young man who had unmasked. "You know me," he said with his peculiar smile.

"No," said Sylvia, "I don't intend to know you. You are not like the others."

As she turned away he called after her with a laugh, "Trust me, I'll have him arrested for you."

Sylvia did not hesitate to make her discovery known, and soon Judge Pirtle and two other men started in pursuit of the desperado.

As Sylvia moved restlessly here and there a flame reached out and caught her fluttering dress. In an instant the blaze shot upward. There was a frantic shriek, swiftly smothered in a heavy blanket. Then some one carried her out into the clear air, where she soon recovered.

"Who did that?" she asked, her eyes falling at last on Allerton. "Did you?"

"No. But it ought to have been. I owe you that much. But it wasn't. I never saw the fellow before."

Two or three neighbors standing around, began to describe him: Tall, fair, fresh-colored, with light waving hair. Sylvia recognized the description.

"Where is the leader of the mob? Did they get him?"

"Yes; he's safe enough by this time."

"And that young man" —

"In jail, too. The captain claimed his as his lieutenant. He thinks the law can't touch them, but he'll find himself vastly mistaken."

"What will be done with them?"

"They'll be sent to the penitentiary."

"He sha'n't be sent. I myself will go and testify that he had nothing to do with it, only to keep the others from mischief."

"That will do no good. You have no proof."

"I'll go, at any rate."

Sylvia did as she threatened, but to no purpose. The law, finding popular opinion against the prisoners, made up its mind to act, and it did act with promptness and decision. The two were sentenced to ten years each in the State penitentiary. The captain proved to be the fraudulent claimant to the Pinkney estate, and the young man, in spite of his mild manners and attractive face, turned out to be the hero of numerous desperate shooting affrays.

CHAPTER XV.

CAMPING OUT.

THE unjust persecution of which Allerton had been the object did him one good turn: it gained for him the good will of the better portion of the community; it turned the vacillating scale of popularity in his favor. Yet the secret current of unpopularity existing against him in obscure, outlying ruts and gullies, ran deeper than ever. "It will die away in time," he told his Job's comforters who brought him discouraging reports from these outposts. "When they find out how sincerely I wish them a real honest, wholesome prosperity, their ill-feeling will soon subside."

"They are only a lot of wild galoots who are tearing about over the country like savages," Judge Pirtle assured him. "Even that captain, who claims to be Pinkney's cousin, is a moonshiner and an outlaw, who ought to have been in jail long ago. He tried to break the will, but no one would help him. I don't think many of the mob belong here."

"Every country has its vicious class," Allerton returned. "New York, London, Boston — all are infested with roughs and desperadoes."

Portia expressed her sympathy, not in the old, impulsive way, but with sufficient warmth and earnestness. "It is too bad you should have to suffer such indignity and loss merely because those worthless people do not like you."

"I haven't lost much. And no human being is worthless," he returned; then, after a pause, continued: "The true things of this life, fortunately, are not at the mercy of chance. Men often grow hard, coarse and callous in accumulating wealth, and then, a mistake, a sudden accident, the treachery of a trusted friend, sweeps it from their grasp. The only thing of real importance is the formation of character."

What a bright and kindly beam he throws on everything, thought Portia. But she only said, "Yes; that is all we can take away with us."

"Each has a message to deliver," he added, "and one is no less important than another. What we should look to most carefully is, that we do not fail the one or the many to whom we are sent. The hardest lesson we have to learn is reverence for that which is below us."

"Do you people never talk of anything not 'fourteen flats above the level of common heads,' as Mr. Mallory says?" exclaimed Corinne, who now came out on the veranda followed by Mopsy,

dragging a rug and an easy-chair. "To change the atmosphere and lower the tone of conversation to the level of my trivial mind, will you join our camping expedition next week? Besides your good company, we depend on you to drive our carriage. We have a lot of old army tents, and if you refuse to go, we will all know it is because of a revengeful prejudice against sleeping under a canopy that has sheltered a rebel.

"You have made it quite impossible for him to refuse," said Portia, with a laugh.

"Not impossible for him," said Corinne significantly.

"Thank you very much," said Allerton amiably. "I shall be delighted to go, and to drive for you."

Corinne expressed her satisfaction, and the next half-hour was spent in discussing ways and means.

On the appointed morning, just as the miscellaneous assortment of vehicles had ranged themselves in starting order, a shiny new barouche came dashing up.

"Was there ever anything so aggravating!" cried Blanche in a tone of extreme irritation. "There they are, and everything's spoilt!"

Corinne made a grimace, and Portia's face lengthened visibly.

"Who are they?" inquired Allerton, eying the new-comers with quiet disfavor.

"Our charming Cousins Skidmore, from L——.

The most disagreeable people in the world," said Blanche. "If we take them along everybody will be made uncomfortable, so we might as well go back. They don't care anything about us, and I can't imagine what has brought them now."

"Indeed! I'm not going back," said Corinne decisively. "They can come, or they can stay, but I am going. There's Jule and Salina and Ned and — who can that other fellow be?"

The brilliant contents of the barouche were well calculated to confound the rural party. Nor were the rural party entirely unmoved.

"Howd'y do, Corinne! Howd'y do, Blanche! Howd'y do, Portia!" cried the vivacious blonde, Salina, in a hoarse contralto — as if she had a bad cold. But the more dignified brunette, Julia, affected a more ceremonious greeting. As the two carriages were drawn up side by side, "Mr. Allerton" was presented to the new-comers, and "Mr. Hardy" to the Ingram party.

"We came on purpose to go," continued Salina. "Clara Crugar told us about it. Clara's just back from Vassar — awful independent. Rows and drives and shoots. Up to everything! I felt a big thump on my back, down town, the other day, and thought a policeman was knocking me down. I looked round, awful scared, and who should it be but Clara. Fred had written her about the camping expedition, and Clara was wild to go, and I made up my mind"—

"Drive on, Ned," interrupted Julia. "There's no use keeping everything waiting for Salina to dilate on Clara Crugar's vagaries."

Ned, a facetious youth who had been entertaining his friend Mr. Hardy with disparaging remarks on the motley procession, gave the horses a sharp cut, and Salina was whirled away still talking, lifting her voice higher and higher as her audience escaped in the distance.

It was noon when they reached their destination — a half-mile reach of level creek-bank, overshadowed by magnificent forest trees; beech, oak, maple, all as lofty as the tallest cathedral spire.

They were immensely hungry, and the bountiful spread on the clean turf — the brassy sky shut out by the cool green canopy high overhead — drew forth the general exclamation, "Why don't we always eat out-doors?"

There was a start of surprise when Allerton, taking off his hat, said, with a sunny smile, "If no one has any objections, I should like to ask a blessing."

Certainly not; and the simple, impressive ceremony seemed so appropriate to their stately surroundings, that Judge Pirtle and Gen. Witherspoon each in turn assisted thereafter in keeping it up. It is true Jack Snead and the Skidmores came near laughing out, but, fortunately, by wonderful self-control managed to restrain their risibilities to a mere internal commotion.

Everybody talked; no one listened, unless indeed it were Portia, who seemed unaccountably interested in the gay persiflage which fell from Mallory's lips. Her pale-blue cotton gown was very becoming, and the loose braids which had taken the place of her flowing locks, gave her a very womanly look.

Allerton observed his pupil with a singular feeling of estrangement. Could this self-sustained young woman be the shy girl he had found, a few months ago, poring over old magazines?

She seemed suddenly to have sprung into full maturity; as a flower we have watched that blooms while we sleep. Her glance, no longer shy, met the observer's scrutiny with the dignity of one who has discovered her own and their relative worth. All schoolgirlish awkwardness, impertinence and brusqueness had vanished forever. She was a young lady; a social factor of importance, and seemingly fully aware of the significance of the transformation. Their old joyous comradeship was at an end.

In the meantime it is not to be inferred that the L—— delegation kept modestly in the background. Rather, the combined energy and persistence with which they thrust themselves to the front seriously threatened the extinction of the original party.

Salina, especially, seemed to think the whole thing a discovery of her own, and appropriated the best of everything as her natural right.

"What *distingué* fellow was that you managed to monopolize all dinner-time, Portia?" she inquired in a stage whisper. "The only gentleman in the lot, as far as I can see, unless it's that priggish fellow who asked a blessing. Wasn't it funny?"

"No," returned Portia. "It was solemn and appropriate. The other is Mr. Mallory, one of our neighbors."

"Indeed! Is he rich? Is he travelled? He isn't a bit like the rest, who haven't a particle of style. And such grammah I nevah heawd! I daresay he's bored to death with the stupidity of this little place."

"It is his native place, he ought to be used to it by this time," said Portia. "And he isn't obliged to stay."

"You see," in an undertone, "Jule expects to marry Mr. Hardy, though she's furious whenever I mention it. That's the reason why we haven't gone to the Branch yet, as we planned. I made such a fuss papa gave me a hundred and fifty dollahs," raising her voice, "to buy one of those beautiful moire dresses — old pink, mine was."

"A hundred and fifty dollars!" cried Corinne, catching the last sentence. "Why, I'd be afraid to sit down in a hundred and fifty dollar dress. The most money I ever had at a time was two dollars and a half."

"Where is your Mr. Allerton from? Bawston!

Heavens! if I didn't think as much. What's Uncle Ingram thinking of? And Corinne likes him, too. How would you relish a Yankee brother-in-law? What's he doing here? The Pinkney estate? You don't say so! Well, he's certainly nice-looking, if he is a prig."

Portia interrupted by reminding her that Mr. Allerton was near by, and not deaf.

Salina did not allow her interest in Mr. Mallory to cool by delay, but as soon as an introduction was obtained, adroitly decoyed him into an exploring stroll along the banks of the creek.

"Salina is dreadful!" exclaimed Corinne, looking after them. "I should think you'd be too much ashamed to laugh at her, Portia."

"There's no harm in Salina," said Portia.

"You see, Mr. Allerton, Aunt Mary was only sixteen when she married Uncle Skidmore, who, though he makes plenty of money, is of a common family. They go into good society, but nothing seems to improve Salina. I shudder to think of the impression she will make at Long Branch."

"My dear young lady, she will not be alone in her crudity," remarked Mr. Allerton, with polite candor. "There will be others of the same type from all parts of the country."

"From Boston?" inquired Portia mischievously.

"Perhaps even from Boston."

Mallory found escape from Salina's fascinations a somewhat difficult affair; but by insisting that

the walk was too long for her, that she ought to be resting from the fatigues of the day, in short, courteously dismissing her, ostensibly for her own sake, he managed to get her back to camp. Then he joined the busy workers who toiled at the encampment as children toil at a mill-dam they have been forbidden to build.

Judge Pirtle and Mr. Allerton were digging trenches around the tents; Gen. Witherspoon and Hugh Middleton were setting up a stove; all were having a splendid time, their relish for this hard play heightened by the thought of the real work they escaped by playing truant, and by vague visions of the dullness that had fallen on the Granger's Association, the Reading Club, and the weekly prayer-meeting in the absence of their liveliest, most wide-awake members. Nor was their ardor diminished by the thought of the snarl they were sure to find everything in on their return.

"I never thought digging such fun before," said Jack Snead, who was overhauling everything and, as Mrs. Pirtle declared, "making a mess of things generally." The two diggers had sat down for a regular school-boyish outburst of laughter.

Squire Hardman, the massive, was helping to clear away the dishes; Mr. Reese, the lawyer, was sweeping up; the Skidmores disposed of the tedium by retiring to a shady spot and playing euchre all the afternoon. At night Chinese lanterns were hung in the trees; the gentlemen retired

to a grassy plat, under the moonlight, to smoke their cigars.

"This is better than White Sulphur," said Judge Pirtle enthusiastically.

"Better than Raccoon Hollow, even," said Mallory.

"Beats Saratoga all hollow," declared the general.

So well pleased were these Solons that they sat up half the night, talking.

Of political grievances? No. Of the welfare of nations? The tariff? The last new craze in art or literature? O no! Of Ghosts.

"I don't pretend to know the cause of this thing," began Judge Pirtle. "I will only state facts and let each draw his own conclusions: For several weeks the niggahs had been excited about a woman in white wandering over the house at night. Tim had seen her in the orchard, she had stood at the head of Eph's bed, Dinah had seen her in the nursery. Such tales are always common after a death in the family, and I paid no attention. But the morning after that eight-inch snow, you remember, Dinah came in with eyes like moons. A lady's tracks in the snow stopped short, she said, in the middle of the lawn. I went out and saw the tracks — a lady's slipper with no heels — and, sure enough, they commenced in one broad unbroken sheet of snow, went to the house door, to my south window, to the little office door, and then to the very centre of a wide, unbroken

space, and there the two feet seemed to have planted themselves, side by side, and stopped short. There wasn't another track of any kind within ten feet of the spot. The snow had fallen in the night, and this was seven o'clock in the morning. The tracks had certainly been made in the night. I don't pretend to account for it; I only state the facts as they were." And Judge Pirtle re-lit his cigar and puffed away in the profound silence that ensued.

"I have no experience of my own to relate," said Gen. Witherspoon, at length, "but my wife and her sister came home from a walk one evening with a queer story. They were watching the sunset from the top of that big log that forms part of the pasture fence, when they noticed in the field opposite — which is completely shut in by a high rail fence — a little lady on a little pony, both so remarkable-looking that they watched her closely, to discover if possible who she might be, how she got into the field, and where she was going. The pony was cream-colored, with shaggy mane and tail, and the little lady had on a high poke bonnet with white plumes in it, and a riding skirt a shade or two darker than her horse. Her whole dress was of a fashion that had not been seen for fifty years or more. While they watched her she disappeared behind a brier patch in the middle of the field, and they never saw her again. They sent a couple of darkies over there to see if they could

find her, but they came back saying there was nothing there. It was a strange thing, for both couldn't have been mistaken."

Allerton, recalling the Boston fathers who were deceived by the Salem mummeries, held his peace.

The sky was ablaze with stars. The birds twittered softly, and now and then one broke into a song.

Suddenly a wild screech issued from one of the tents to which the ladies had retired. The whole party scrambled to their feet. Judge Pirtle rushed to the spot, but returned almost immediately with a look of cold disgust. Miss Skidmore — the lively one — had jumped into a cot with such energy that the thing had collapsed and let her down.

In the midst of Squire Hardman's blood-curdling tale of a shapeless thing in black, came another outcry from the tents. None of the smoking party moved until Mrs. Pirtle called for assistance.

"It's your turn, Reese," said the judge, and the lawyer rose slowly and moved off toward the door of the tent. Something cold had touched Blanche's nose — she was sleeping on a rug, she and Portia having given up their cots to the cousins — and she was positive it was a snake.

Nobody could rest until every square inch of the tent was subjected to rigid scrutiny.

Sure enough, a dazed-looking toad was discovered in a remote corner of the tent, making desperate efforts to hop through the canvas.

Mr. Reese tenderly assisted him out, and once more quiet was restored.

Nobody awoke next morning until the sun was high in the heavens. Salina pretended to be greatly disturbed lest she should be seen through the ventilation holes at the top of the tent, while making her toilet.

"How?" exclaimed Blanche derisively. "Is there a man in the party ten feet high?"

CHAPTER XVI.

AT ODDS.

THE familiar association of camp life served to bring about a much better understanding between Allerton and his neighbors, who, though lively and not over-trained in conversational restraint, were really warm-hearted and hospitable people.

True, he cared nothing for hunting, which was "stupid," had no enthusiasm for horses, which seemed "queer," where even ladies were connoisseurs in horseflesh, and, aside from his obnoxious political views, had rather dangerous ideas on social and religious subjects.

Still he was not self-assertive, he never obtruded his views or advice, and took their chaffing so good-naturedly that he was generally voted an agreeable addition to their party, instead of the kill-joy they had feared.

The men spent most of their time in hunting and fishing, and the ladies, in the dearth of other amusement, were driven to fancy work.

"It's a shame the way you ladies waste your

time in piling up stitches where none are needed," said Judge Pirtle, examining, with disapproving eyes, Blanche's elaborate linen embroidery.

"It isn't pretty, either," said Jack candidly. "I'd rather have the plain piece."

"It's a providential arrangement to keep women out of mischief," Mr. Mallory declared. "I've noticed that the embroidering ones make the best housekeepers."

"I have a perfect contempt for your model housekeeper who spends her days in drudgery," exclaimed Blanche. "But I suppose that is what I am coming to. I can see myself in a cotton dress and long apron, wearing myself into a fretful shadow, warring against the very dust of which we are made."

Poor Blanche, who was not pretty, had learned to be bright and tidy and useful instead. But sometimes her soul revolted from the prosaic future which seemed to her the inevitable outcome of her practical life. To her, as to many another earnest young soul, the homely little duties of every-day life seemed paltry and mean.

"Oh! don't," cried Mallory. "Good temper is better, any day, than a spotless house."

"You mustn't get married, then, Blanche," said Judge Pirtle, "if that's the sort of wife you're going to make."

"Not get married!" in a tone of mock horror. "Why, what else is there? Isn't that the grand

aim of a woman's life? Be good and industrious, and maybe you'll catch a husband. That's our creed."

"Worse and worse," exclaimed the judge. "The most odious sight in this world is a woman engaged in husband-hunting. If there's no other chance for her, for the sake of national decency and the abolition of the slave trade, let a pension be given her."

"I think a woman ought to be dealt with officially for marrying a man for his money," said Mallory. "It's the worst sort of robbery."

"Poor women!" said Blanche, laughing. "They mustn't work for a living, they mustn't hunt for a suitable husband, they mustn't marry for money" —

"Of course," interrupted Salina. "That was all settled ages ago. Let's have a little reading. Here's Tennyson's Maud."

Everbody had a bad cold, but Mallory was at last prevailed upon to make an effort, and taking an easy attitude on the dry, mossy bank, he read in a dreamy, musing tone, such parts as he preferred.

"Did you see how he read that at Portia?" Corinne said to Allerton, after the reading was over. "I really believe Portia is going to be the first one of us off at last. What a merry time they are having over those stupid books," a little enviously. "Did you see Portia blush then?"

"'Girls blush sometimes, because they are alive,' you know," said Allerton, with a calm smile. But

his success in alienating his pupil's young affections was not the matter of triumph to him it should have been.

"What's the rest of that?" said Corinne, frowning meditatively.

"'They have drawn too near the fire of life, like gnats,
And flare up bodily, wings and all. What then?
Who's sorry for a gnat or girl?'"

"Not many of them know anything about the fire of life," said Corinne. "And none have wings to flare up."

"Let's have a game of base-ball," proposed Jack to the restless party.

"If you'll let us play," stipulated Salina.

"Certainly. Of course! Wouldn't think of playing without you."

Salina was given a bat, and told to strike whenever a ball was pitched her. She aimed a furious blow at the first, but missed it; her back hair tumbled down, and a bunch of curls dropped to the ground, "Hold on! Wait till I fix this odious hair."

But at the next stroke the bat flew out of her hand and hit poor Jack on the leg, at which he set up such a loud howl that Salina fled the field.

A few minutes afterwards she made a descent upon Mallory, who was pretending to help Portia with her lessons. "There are splendid blackberries down the creek, and Mrs. Pirtle says you

are to come and carry the basket. I suppose," she added in an uninviting tone, "you don't care to go, Portia?"

"No, thank you, Salina."

"Such a mope as you are, Portia. Always poking over a book! Not a bit of life. Thank goodness, there's not a drop of stupid blood in my body! I always was full of energy. If you're not going, I'll wear your veil; mine's so expensive the briers will be sure to tear it."

She snatched up the veil, throwing her own into Portia's lap, and called to Mr. Mallory to "Come on!"

Portia threw the lace veil out of her lap, and looked so irritable that Mallory, bending submissively toward her, exclaimed, "Here, hit me!"

"Mr. Mallory," called Salina shrilly, "we'll be left if we don't hurry."

"By the way, Miss Skidmore, I should have told you before, there are thorns and dreadful scratchy things, all mixed up with the berries. And frequently snakes" —

"Oh! I dare say," interrupted Salina sarcastically. "You prefer grammah and geography, possibly."

Mr. Mallory, feebly deprecating invidious comparisons, rose with the air of a martyr, but Salina, as he anticipated, haughtily declined his company and whisked off with an indifference rather too elaborate to be real.

"Please tell me how I have incurred the weight of Miss Skidmore's favor?" he inquired, as Salina's blue dress disappeared with a final indignant flutter. "Somebody's been telling her I'm a bloated bond-holder, or some such trumpery. Couldn't you do me the favor to undeceive her, Portia? Tell her I'm an unlucky dog, not worth my salt. Living at the expense of my friend Crugar, here," as Crugar came up, in the hope of recruiting his euchre party which had lost a valuable member in Salina. "Crugar's the lucky chap. Regular millionaire! You won't? Now that is all the proof I want that you're at the bottom of it. Wait, Portia! Hold on a minute," as Portia, aware how like a conspiracy to prolong their interview these repeated refusals to leave might appear in pantomime, gathered up her books for departure. "Here's a hideous bug — a bug with a dozen diabolical legs — blindly entombing himself in your hair."

"Oh! take it out, do take it out!" cried Portia wildly.

"Luckless fellow! Tangled — like the hearts of Lilith's victims — in the tresses of her golden hair."

Portia sat very still, in a shrinking attitude, while he, with needless deliberation, dislodged the harmless beetle.

Once, he accidentally touched her cheek. "What a miracle!" he exclaimed. "That cheek was white.

I touched it, and, behold! pink as the dawn. Come, let's analyze and classify this adventurous fellow," holding it up to view.

"I must go and recite my lessons now," returned Portia. "Let the poor thing go, do! It has lost one leg already."

"What is one leg among so many? If you are going there I am off," making a wry face. "The Massachusetts atmosphere doesn't agree with my constitution. It's too cool."

"You're prejudiced, you mean."

"Perhaps I am," he returned indifferently. "And I begin to think it would be a good thing if you were, too."

Was it possible, Allerton wondered as he observed them, that so young a girl could resist the subtle flattery of this marked attention from so handsome and agreeable a man? And why should she? Their marriage would delight the whole family. Nothing would please them better.

When he was through with the lessons he got his sketch-book and went tramping off down the creek. Coming upon Gen. Witherspoon patiently holding a pole waiting for the fish to bite, he began to make a sketch of the military-looking figure. But the general moved up beside him and began to talk of the war.

"I know there was some wicked work at Andersonville," he admitted. "It was in bad hands; worse, perhaps, than any Northern prison. Though

one of my friends was shot in a Northern prison by some young men who fired in among the prisoners 'just for fun.' In war, bad men and bad passions come to the surface. I had charge of several hundred prisoners once, when recovering from a severe wound. Some were very lovable men; others were ill-tempered. I had frequently to punish them for fighting. One method was tossing them in a blanket. They begged so hard one day that I let them give me a toss, and the rascals threw me about twenty feet into the air. They enjoyed that immensely; more than I did, I guess." And the old general laughed.

Allerton responded with some ludicrous experiences of his own, and the two began to like each other vastly.

The fifth day out was Judge Pirtle's birthday.

At dinner, a handsome rose-wood wine hamper, containing a dozen cut-glass decanters, was brought forth. Everybody had a glass except Allerton. He, alone, persistently refused, to the high offense of most of the party; for Athens was not then the prohibition community it is now.

"Possibly Catawba wine doesn't agree with the baked bean constitution," suggested Jack.

"He fears the evil effects of example on this volatile party, perhaps," said Mr. Reese.

"Or it may be that he fears indulging too freely if he begins," added Julia Skidmore spitefully. At least Mr. Hardy who had deserted her for the

more vivacious Corinne, displayed no such fears as he helped himself to the third glass.

"This is a free country, surely," said Gen. Witherspoon, "and the man who sticks to his opinions, popular or unpopular, has my respect, whether his opinions happen to be mine or not."

"My fears are neither for myself nor for this party," returned Allerton, looking very cool and quiet, though he shrank unspeakably from the contest he saw before him. "They are for the weak who cannot stand by a pledge without help. If we have the strength to deny ourselves, we should use it in behalf of those who have been bereft of theirs, or who never had any."

This was unfurling the red rag of war with a vengeance, where even the pillars in the church made and sold and drank whiskey. People are most sensitive where most conscious of defect. Profound conviction is always calm.

Even Judge Pirtle flushed slightly as he assured Mr. Allerton that no one would insist on his taking wine. He was welcome to his preferences and his opinions, and "all the water he wanted."

At this witticism there was a loud chorus of laughter.

Mr. Mallory poured out a glass of wine and handed it to Portia, who had skillfully managed to be overlooked in the general distribution, with an ironical bow, as if anticipating a prompt and haughty refusal.

Conscious that more than one pair of eyes watched her movements with malicious interest, Portia accepted the wine and drank it, though the color deepened in her cheeks as she thought how often she had expressed herself in favor of total abstinence. Allerton left the table amid the open jibes of the lively party. In spite of his self-control, it must be confessed he did wince at the shouts of laughter which reached his ears as he hurried away.

"If you've got anything ag'in me"—called Tom.

"I have got nothing 'ag'in' anybody," he interrupted with a vague smile.

He had driven his own horses to the Ingram carriage. He now bridled one of these, and was returning to his tent for a saddle, too preoccupied with the struggles and difficulties of his present situation to see anything not directly in his path, when he heard Portia's voice pronounce his name.

"Mr. Allerton," she said in a low tone and without looking at him, "I acted the coward at the dinner table, as usual. I knew you were right; I hate whiskey as badly as you do, but I was afraid of the others. It wasn't as bad as whiskey, but that's no excuse. The only way to kill it is to strike at it every time, even though you know your puny strokes will have no effect."

"But you never know that. You know to the contrary. The ocean is composed of drops, the snowstorm of small flakes, the desert of minute

grains of sand. 'If I don't come up here, some other noxious weed will,' says the deadly nightshade. Its berries look inviting, and the children eat them and die. That is the sort of argument the distiller uses, and the consequences are far more certain and fatal than the chance of poisoning from a noxious weed. A wild beast turned loose could not accomplish the misery and ruin that one distillery can, and does. And because these men are rich and well-connected" —

"Weak and silly people are afraid to oppose them," added Portia, as he hesitated. "But it is not because they are rich — some of them are not — but because I like them."

"Yes; I like them, too," rejoined Allerton. "Too well not to hasten their conversion. Capable of all that is pure and noble, isn't it too bad they should extinguish all that is divine in their nature — the one thing we need for the next world — with that nauseous thing? Perhaps the next time you'll be more courageous. The first time, you ran from the snake, but the next time you were braver than even I."

"I didn't come out here to speak to you about this," said Portia, flushing uneasily under his praise. "I thought you went the other way."

"I did; but I came back this way."

"Are you going to the cliffs?"

"I hadn't thought of it, but it would be a pleasant ride, especially if you would go with me."

"I should like to go. Shall we invite the others?"

"I don't care about the others; but if you would have a pleasanter time with a party, invite as many as you please."

"Corinne would want to go, of course," said Portia musingly. "And there is only one pony."

"Then suppose we go alone this time, and if we are pleased we can tell the others."

"I'll have to wear Corinne's habit, too."

"Well, get into it quickly, and come around the back way, and she won't know the difference," Allerton counseled, with wicked enjoyment of Corinne's prospective wrath. "I'll tell old Uncle Jeff just as we are starting; the message will reach them by the time we are half-way."

Both laughed, for Uncle Jeff was noted for his snail-like movements.

But in spite of every precaution, Corinne espied them as they were starting.

CHAPTER XVII.

TO THE CLIFFS.

"WELL, if that isn't assurance!" exclaimed Corinne, coloring with anger. "My horse and my habit. Would your Highness condescend to inform me where you are going with them?"

"Only a short ride — to the cliffs," said Portia, in an ingratiating tone, slyly giving the mettlesome little pony a touch with the whip. The pony was off like a flash, but Allerton tarried a few moments to smooth matters with Corinne.

"We thought of inviting you to come along," he said, pretending not to see the injured look on Corinne's pretty face, "but as the way is uncertain and perhaps tedious, and the day rather warm, we decided on making an explorative trip before committing a whole party to ills we know not of."

"Very well," said Corinne proudly. "Perhaps I should not have cared anything about the cliffs, and it's so hot, anyway."

It was hot, and the way would have seemed long to Portia had not Allerton, anxious to pre-

serve the gay and blithesome spirit with which she had set forth, exerted himself to entertain her. He related some of his college experiences, of which he had never spoken before, and Portia listened with deep interest.

But the horses seemed so heated they drew rein at length beneath a broad beech-tree. "How oppressive!" exclaimed Portia, pushing back her hat, while Allerton sat fanning with his.

Nature appeared scarcely to breathe. The air seemed stagnant. There was a dull line of distant clouds in the northwest, but that did nothing toward abating the fierce glare of the sun.

"It is a fortunate thing you sister did not come," said Allerton, "she dislikes the heat so much."

"And cares so little for scenery," added Portia. "Corinne wouldn't ride a rod out of her way to see the finest landscape in the world, unless she had some other object in view," and Portia laughed.

"Are you sure you do your sister justice?"

"O, yes! I give Corinne due credit for all her good qualities, I think."

"And what are those?"

"Well," thoughtfully, "Corinne is a good nurse, when she cares to be."

"You speak as if that were seldon."

"Do I?" As she remarked the quiet smile accompanying this speech a sudden thought touched her heart with pain. Was it possible she could be jealous of her sister? Perhaps — and the warm

flush deepened on her face — perhaps he saw her jealousy and wished to help her to subdue it.

"Perhaps I do not appreciate Corinne," she said, lifting her bridle rein and flapping the drowsy pony. "That is why we are not to judge, I suppose. Shall we go on now? It is not growing any cooler, and the sooner we get there, the sooner we can start back."

Half-way up the slanting wagon road, cut into the cliff-side, they paused, the horses breathing heavily. "I fear," said Allerton, scanning the heavens, "there's a storm brewing. Perhaps it would be better to start back at once."

Portia pausing at an opening in the timber, looked abroad searchingly. "Yes, I think there's going to be a storm. Southern weather is very treacherous."

The sky had suddenly assumed a sinister aspect. The bare crags jutting sharply against the sallow heavens looked wan and haggard.

"Yes," repeated Portia, "we must hurry, or we will never get out of these hills alive. The most furious storms come on us in this sudden way."

"Let us hurry, then," said Allerton, with sudden animation. As they hastened down the rough wagon road a strange, appalling stillness settled on the waiting hills. The birds fluttered uneasily among the motionless trees, as if uncertain of the safety of their covert.

This prophetic pause was broken by a loud

rumble, as of an advancing army. A warm wind passed over them. Allerton, checking the horses, unfolded the water-proof fastened at the back of his saddle, and threw it around Portia. Despite her remonstrances he fastened it securely under her chin, her wind-blown hair meanwhile clinging caressingly about his hands.

Portia talked continuously, though what she said neither she nor Allerton had any definite idea. He thought it all his own fault, but, lifting a searching glance to her face he saw in its exaltation the reflection of his own mood.

Somehow, unawares, while each looked another way, Nature had secretly busied herself at knitting together these two earnest souls.

Portia would not meet his glance, yet she felt it. Was he thinking of Amy now — only of Amy? And then she laughed, she knew not why.

Allerton did not laugh. Had he given utterance then to the feelings which seemed to well up from the very depth of his soul, he would have passionately declared his love, and entreated her love in return. He would have intensified the declaration and entreaty by ardent kisses and caresses, and all their lives might have been changed.

But Allerton was a gentleman. He did not propose to be ruled by wild impulse, nor to allow the excitement of an hour to change his whole life. Sternly reminding himself of the thrilling nature of their surroundings, the helpless isolation of the

position, he forcibly kept up a rigid self-control, though his heart beat wildly and the thoughts surged tumultuously within.

A hot breath swept over them. They urged their horses forward. Allerton did not look at Portia again, but as he spoke of the grandeur of the scene, his eyes grew darker, more brilliant, and an expression of singular beauty and elation passed over his countenance.

Something in the averted look, the lifted brow, the tender mouth, oppressed Portia with a strange timidity. One of Corinne's cynical, world-wise speeches flashed through her mind: "Under certain propitious conditions, any man will love any woman."

She suspected the falsity of this sweeping assertion, yet in her inexperience it had its influence — as Corinne intended it should.

"Are you afraid?" he asked. "The wind will come with a rush. If you feel any fear, you will not hesitate to catch hold of me?"

"O, no!"

They hastened onward. The road crept out of the woods, the sky darkened. Suddenly the whole heavens seemed in motion, the clouds whirling upward with frightful rapidity.

Portia involuntarily reached out her hand — that blind groping after something human and sympathetic which one instinctively feels before an unknown peril. Allerton grasped it reassur-

ingly. "Have courage!" he exclaimed. "We will soon be out of these hills, and then we are safe. It is too violent to last long."

"Isn't it strange? Isn't it awful?" exclaimed Portia. "I always loved a storm, but there is something too terrific in this. Is it a cyclone? What will become of the camp? Yes, it must be a cyclone! We must reach the foot of the hill before it strikes us, or we'll be dashed to pieces against the stones."

Their horses plunged forward without any urging now.

"Look, look!" cried Portia, pointing toward the plain stretched out before them where a strange, funnel-shaped cloud, black as ink, came swiftly toward them. The horses dashed onward, wild with fright. The rumble increased to a fierce clangor, and the vast, whirling globe of darkness came swiftly onward, gathering up fences, leaves, branches of trees, everything that came in its way, twirling them round and round together high up in the air.

They were at the foot of the hill. Allerton sprang off his horse and lifted Portia from the saddle, and then — and then the powers of darkness were upon them. They felt themselves snatched upward into the horrible swirling darkness. They tried to cling together, but the rapid succession of blows from limbs and fence rails and other whirling objects, soon parted them far asunder.

Happily they were too stunned to see the horrible altitude to which they were whirled, and soon came merciful unconsciousness.

Amid the awful din and confusion a harrowing cry smote upon their ears, like a wild cry from the unknown. Neither of them recognized it as the voice of the patient brute whose voice is so seldom heard, either in terror or in pain. It was probably Allerton's horse, as it was slightly injured, while the pony escaped entirely unhurt.

On her first return to consciousness, Portia sat up and stared with dilated eyes into the thick darkness which enveloped her. The blast yelled pitilessly in her ears. Then suddenly the heavens split, and a fiery shaft leaped out with a crash that shook the earth. The sky shone like burnished brass. The crags around her stood out shrouded in a veil of light. Near her, amid the mass of sticks and stones, lay a dead sheep; nothing else that had ever breathed, in sight.

She got up and staggered along in the darkness for a few steps, then stumbled over a log and fell to the earth. Faint and dizzy she rose again and staggered on a few steps farther, but suddenly felt herself sinking again upon the ground.

Her next sensation was that of being carried swiftly along in the darkness. A gentle rain was falling, her head was upon some one's shoulder, moving helplessly up and down as he strode quickly onward.

She was dimly conscious of a petulant feeling of anger that he had not placed her in a more comfortable position. Her heart beat heavily, and she felt cold and dizzy and wretched. It seemed to her as if weeks must have passed since the horrible whirlwind snatched them away into nothingness.

Her clothes felt wet and disagreeable, and a selfish sense of indifference to everything but her own discomfort possessed her.

On they went through the darkness, a small lantern carried by her unknown deliverer creating a dim arc of light around them.

Was it Allerton? she speculated dimly. The long strides, the easy carriage suggested some one taller and more accustomed to mountainous roads.

Vague fancies of highwaymen and dark caverns began to flit through her mind. She had heard of "moonshiners" living among the hills of the eastern part of the State; perhaps they lived in these hills, too. And then her heart gave a wild flutter and stood still as she thought of the Ku Klux Klan.

She could endure it no longer. Cautiously lifting her head she took a survey of the outline of his. It was shapely, proudly poised and covered with a brief growth of dark hair. This was all she could discover by the dim light of the lantern.

While she pondered how she should address this mysterious knight-errant, he paused and set her

on her feet. He did not relinquish his hold, but looked down on her and smiled.

"And so you are alive?" he said. "And are you hurt?"

He felt the vibration which passed over her at the sound of his voice. When he found that she still clung to him and did not speak, he looked alarmed. "Are you hurt, Portia?"

"No," said Portia in a weak voice. "O, Mr. Mallory! I'm so glad it's you."

"Are you?" in a pleased tone.

"I thought it might be a Ku Klux."

"Oh!" Mr. Mallory laughed. "Where is your brave cavalier?" he asked in an ironical tone.

Portia relinquished her grasp, staggering slightly. "I don't know," she said.

He took hold of her again.

"Perhaps he was killed." And then she began to cry and to beg him to go at once and search for Allerton.

"Not I," said Mallory; "at least not until I get you under some shelter."

"I can stay here," urged Portia.

He looked down on her, frowning slightly. "See here! As soon as you are safely housed I'll look after your sweet friend, but not an instant before."

He unfastened his horse from the drooping branch of the beech-tree to which he had fastened it some hours ago, and placed Portia in the saddle.

"You are not going to walk?" she asked.

"Why not?"

"Oh! you must be very tired. And it will take so long!"

"I forgot your anxiety for expedition," he said, with a laugh.

"Won't you get into the saddle and let me ride behind you? I would much rather," she entreated.

"But your dress?"

"That is spoiled already. The dress is nothing." She looked down at it, and for the first time realized that it was Corinne's precious habit. And her pony, too, they doubtless would never see again!

At her insistance he moved her back and mounted in the saddle. Then as they rode through the forest, he gave her a humorous description of the breaking up of the encampment, and their flight to a neighboring farmhouse.

"Hello there!" he called at the door of the first log cabin they came upon.

"Land sakes alive!" exclaimed the old negro who opened the door, "git down'n come in, Mastah; wa'n't out'n dat tullible hulican, wuz yo'?"

"How far is it to the next house, Uncle?"

"Nex' white folks's house? Foah mile."

"Let me down here," said Portia. "I'll go right in, and you can go back at once. Perhaps Uncle here, would go with you."

"Cettinly, Mist'ess, cettinly. I go long wid de boss."

But Mallory would not leave her until he saw her seated before a blazing wood fire, and the old colored woman bustling around in search of dry things to put on her. He slipped some money into the hands of each of the old-time servers, knowing too well the surest avenue to their hearts.

"You must take something to put around him," said Portia. "He gave me his water-proof, and I don't know what became of it. I am sure he must be seriously hurt, or we would have seen or heard from him before this."

"Give me a blanket, or something, Auntie," said Mallory; then turning to Portia he continued: "If you are going to worry yourself to death over that fellow, I'll be tempted to knock him in the head when I do find him. You are wasting your sympathies. He's not hurt. I'll warrant he's sitting in some dry place now, waiting for the storm to blow over."

Portia smiled faintly, and "Don Quixote," as he called himself, set forth in search of his enemy, followed by Uncle Hannibal.

Old Aunt Sara almost wore her guest's patience threadbare with her obtrusive questioning in regard to herself, her chance companion, and the whole party. When she had fully reported the whole expedition, down to the disastrous *finale*,

Portia scaled the portentous heights of the old woman's best bed and curled herself up with a sigh of infinite weariness.

"I am too tired and miserable to sleep," she thought, and endeavored to picture Allerton's present condition. Strive as she would, she could not escape the haunting earnestness of the look — the almost passionate tenderness — with which he fastened the cloak under her chin.

What did it mean? What was it so strange, so magnetic, in that glance? Had he forgotten poor Amy so entirely? But no! She would never again be so silly as to think of him except as he wished her to think of him — as her kind, disinterested friend. She was not going to subject herself to another warning.

If Corinne loved him, as she had begun to suspect, then that settled it. Could any living man resist Corinne?

Portia sighed heavily. "If Corinne were not so selfish! I pity him, that is all. I know how disappointed he will be, how hurt, to find himself bound for life to a heartless wife. I know him so well! I like him as a dear friend — I could not help but grieve to see him disappointed and unhappy. I am rather jealous and exacting in my friendships, but I am sure I could never really love. I want only friends. Corinne would never allow her husband to have any friends — especially lady friends."

Then she sighed so deeply as to startle even herself. "Oh! how tired and sore I am. I had almost forgotten it. And Mr. Mallory carried me down that hill. Carried me! How glad I am it was dark," and a pale flush crept over her cheeks.

"There I have a good friend! How safe and reliable he is! Let other people arrange their destinies to suit themselves; I'll not intefere even in thought." And with the next breath, almost, she was asleep.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A GOOD SAMARITAN WHO IS NOT VERY GOOD.

In the gray dawn Allerton opened his eyes and looked vaguely about him. The rain had ceased and a sullen roar seemed slowly dying away in the distance. Nature looked subdued, humbled, as we look when the fiery passion is spent — vainly regretful for the consequent wreck and desolation. But Allerton was not thinking of Nature or her looks.

The picture continuously present within his mind was that of a fair dead face turned up to the sky, the features sharply defined in the cold gray dawn.

He attempted to rise, but could only groan aloud. The inherent instinct of action urged him to further exertion. If it killed him, he must make some effort to find Portia.

He grasped the small tree against which he had been thrown, and with inconceivable agony lifted himself to a sitting posture. There was no living thing near.

Slowly and patiently he crawled onward, pausing frequently to rest and look carefully around. Suddenly he paused and leaned against a tree with a look of hope. He had discovered the fresh horse tracks. While he examined one, a slender blade of grass released itself from the earth, into which it had been pressed, and sprang erect.

"They have just gone by," he said, and closed his eyes, feeling that his task was done.

But soon he grew uneasy again. These might be the tracks of their own horses, or of a party searching for them. He crawled a little farther, and then with a groan lay down to die. "It is all over," he thought, not much caring if it was.

Was this the end — the pitiful end?

Well, it was all pitiful — our lofty aims, our puny achievements. A few years more or less — what difference did it make?

But when he heard a distant "Halloo!" he was ready to live again.

He tried to answer, but the low, hoarse croak sounded more like a raven's than a human voice. There was a pause, and another call. Something in the sound struck him unpleasantly. The third call confirmed his suspicions. He groaned, and made no further attempt to answer, struggling vainly with his strong aversion. He felt that he would as soon die as to owe his life to that man.

Presently he heard footsteps, and, looking up, saw Mallory standing over him.

"Have you found Portia? Is she hurt?" he asked before the other had spoken.

"She's all right. Are you hurt?" The tone was formal, but not unkindly.

"Yes; about used up, I think."

"I have brought my horse; do you think you could ride a quarter of a mile?"

"Thank you" — Allerton hesitated. "I do not like to trouble you. I'll feel better soon, and then perhaps I can walk."

"It's not likely," said Mallory coldly. "I came for you. No doubt you would prefer to die in the open field here, rather than place yourself under the slightest obligation to me; but as I did not consult my own preferences in coming, neither shall I consult yours by leaving you here. Saintly as you pretend to be in some things, I cannot see that it would not be as sinful in you to reject my help, because you hate me, as it would be brutal in me to take you at your word."

With his head propped against a tall rock, haggard from pain and exhaustion, Allerton looked up into the handsome dark face with a hostility that was not diminished by the thought of receiving a service from him.

But it was not left to him to decide.

Mallory lifted him to his feet, and was about to carry him without further ceremony, when Allerton protested that he could walk.

He dragged along so slowly, and with such evi-

dent difficulty, that Mallory at length broke out impatiently: —

"What nonsense! Do you think I'm going to spend the day here to satisfy your foolish pride? I shall carry you!"

"Do go away, and leave me!" groaned Allerton. "You annoy me."

"I don't care!" shouted Mallory. "I want you to hate me. I wouldn't be inflicted with your love, nor your gratitude, for all the wealth of this earth."

"As you please," murmured Allerton faintly, assisting him as much as he could by clinging to Mallory's strong shoulders.

"If you would be so kind as to let me rest one minute," he breathed, and Mallory put him gently down instead of hoisting him into the saddle at once, as he had intended.

"I want to say something to you," he continued after a moment's silence.

There was a carefully measured precision in his tone, as if more than anything he dreaded the slightest display of feeling.

"It is a hard thing to explain," he said, with patient self-control. "You doubtless blame me for your arrest and imprisonment. I did all I could to prevent it. When questioned by the officers, of course I could only tell the truth. And I told the whole truth — of your kindness and your uncle's hospitality, and I fully expected that the

general, as a man of principle and feeling, would respect my obligation as his own."

A brief silence ensued, in which was heard, far down the ravine they had left behind them, the plaintive note of a whip-poor-will calling to his mate.

"You do not believe me?"

"What is it to me whether you sent me to prison and ruined my poor uncle willfully or unwillingly? A man who could requite kindness and hospitality in such cold-blooded measure as that — jeopardizing the lives of people who had spared and helped him when he was at their mercy, merely to avert a speck of dust from the imperceptible thing he calls his conscience — such a man as that is quite beyond my comprehension."

"You believe in doing evil that good may come?"

"I believe in doing the unselfish thing. I would do myself an injury rather than bring harm on others, especially if they had done me a kindness."

"I might have told a lie — weakened my own self-respect and the confidence of others in me, and still the same things would have happened. They knew you had been there; the house would have been searched just the same."

"And pillaged and burned! Why do you recall these scenes? Do you want me to kill you, right here? Do you know that my uncle and aunt

both died from the exposure and anxiety which followed the loss of their home, and all that was to have made their old age comfortable? But I suppose not. What did it matter to you?"

Allerton lifted his hand with an arresting motion.

"You may suppose what you like," he said; "nevertheless, I went back to see them, and found them as fiercely resentful as you are. They would listen to nothing, accept nothing, and so I left some money with the old colored woman" —

"Who deserted them the very next day. We wondered where she got the money to get away with."

"Unfortunate!" murmured Allerton. "I am very sorry. But you know the demoralizing effects of war, even upon simple and well-meaning people. And the boy — there was a boy of twelve or fourteen?"

"Went off with the army after his parent's death, and finally died in the hospital."

"A sad train of calamities! And your eye" —

Mallory made an impatient gesture. "The less said about that, the better."

He beckoned to Uncle Hannibal, who now came hobbling over the fields, and together they hoisted Allerton into the saddle.

"Thank you," said Allerton, sitting erect, though pale and stern. Now and then, as they moved gravely on, with Mallory and the old man on either side of him, he grasped the front of the

saddle with a convulsive movement. Old Hannibal talked garrulously of the damage the storm had done. Tops of houses and barns had been taken off; stock had been killed — whole lines of fences had been blown down.

"Nature, in her inclement moods," said Allerton, "seems needlessly pitiless and cruel."

This Mallory resented. Nature was never cruel, he said, except to rash egotism. To those who understood her, she always suggested means of escape.

"Yet unforeseen events are brought about by circumstances over which we have no control."

Mallory could not deny that. It trenched too close upon his own belief. Mallory would have been an agnostic but for the fatalism bequeathed him by his Calvinistic ancestors. In simple justice he was bound to judge as leniently as possible, a world possessed of no responsibility and no accountability.

"I — I believe I will have to get down a moment and rest," said Allerton faintly, and straightway fell forward insensible.

Mallory caught him as he fell. They were now only a few steps from the house. Uncle Hannibal's kindly black face was full of pity as he helped to carry him within, where they found Portia asleep on the bed.

When Allerton returned to consciousness again he found himself on the floor in the cabin, a small

fire burning in the immense fireplace, and Mallory removing his water-soaked boots.

He rose with some difficulty, and a strange dizziness came over him, then suddenly he dropped into a chair.

Leaning back he closed his eyes for a minute or two and was quite still, while Mallory went on with his investigation of the swollen feet. Both, it seemed, were badly sprained.

"Isn't this a little hard," wailed Allerton's insubordinate soul to its invisible Friend, "that I should be so deeply indebted to this man again? Worse than the pain, worse than the helplessness; yet somehow I have deserved it, of course; somehow I need this trial of strength. Dear Lord!" he murmured reproachfully, "dear Father!" and then resigned himself with what fortitude he could summon to the inevitable.

"I worn out!" He laughed derisively. "Do I look worn out? Good-by! Take care of her, Aunty," and he was off.

He met Judge Pirtle and Mr. Reese wandering aimlessly over the fields, and told them they could go home with clear consciences. He had done the work. Nothing was needed now except the doctor.

He stopped at the farmhouse to let Corinne and Blanche know of their sister's safety.

"And you left Portia there all alone!" said Corinne reproachfully.

"Alone? No; there were rather too many. Allerton, for instance, could have been dispensed with without any serious inconvenience."

"I am going over there," said Corinne determinedly. "It isn't proper for Portia to stay there alone with Mr. Allerton; mamma wouldn't like it."

"Why, Uncle Hannibal and Aunt Sara are there," said Mallory, with a laugh. "But if you are determined to go, you had better take them something to eat." And he gave her directions for finding the place.

Allerton was asleep, tossing restlessly and breathing heavily. Now and then he opened his eyes and looked at Portia, but did not seem to know her. "If I were only a man," she thought, "I might help him; with sympathy, at least, if not otherwise. But, being only a girl, I am useless and in the way."

She had a sincere affection for Allerton, founded on her knowledge of the genuine goodness and purity of his character. That there were others who thought him a humbug, and possibly a scoundrel, made no difference with her. When Crugar declared him "a mean, picayunish sort of fellow," and said he actually blacked his own boots to save a dime, she merely laughed. That was Crugar's idea of gentility. For the man who blacked his own boots, he had the most profound contempt. Nothing, in his estimation, could be meaner. To live luxuriously, even at the expense of credulous friends, was Crugar's idea of being a gentleman.

At about ten o'clock Portia was surprised to see Corinne ride up on the pony. So they had found him, too.

"I am so glad you've come, Corinne," was Portia's greeting. "I don't believe he knows me."

"Can I go and speak to him?" asked Corinne, moving toward the bed without waiting for an answer. "How are you, Mr. Allerton?" she asked, bending over him anxiously.

"Tired — dreadfully tired; but only a sprain or two, and a little cold, I suppose, from being out in the rain all night. Is your sister quite well? I thought she looked pale."

"Portia is all right. I came to see you. Are you sorry? I was afraid you might not want to get well."

"Then there would be one Yankee the less in the world. Wouldn't you be glad of that?"

"O, Mr Allerton! I don't care anything about your being a Yankee. Did you think I did?"

"No, no," he said hastily, turning away. "You were always very kind."

"And you have cared very little for my kindness. I have always known that," said Corinne artfully. "You care more for Portia, I know — much more. Isn't it true? Tell me — I want to know. It is right I should know the truth, whatever it is."

Allerton groaned helplessly. The pain of the situation seemed somehow to mingle with and aggravate his physical discomfort. "I am ill," he said wearily. "Why do you ask me such questions now? Besides, what can it matter?"

Corinne went and sat down on a box in the corner. Her face was flushed in spots, and she trembled visibly. "Here, Corinne, take this chair," said Portia, who had heard nothing of the conversation.

But Corinne pushed her petulantly away, muttering that she was tired, and wanted to be let alone.

Poor Corinne! She was enduring just then the keenest anguish she had ever known, and for the first time endured in silence. She had come, all unaware, upon sequestered depths in her nature hitherto unknown. She had found a master in

her own heart who tyrannized over her as she tyrannized over others.

It was the first time that Corinne had fallen a victim to her own vanity and love of conquest. The intended flirtation had resulted entirely different from the manner she had intended.

Strong as this new feeling was, her vanity was stronger. Corinne would rather have died just then, than suffer Portia to discover her humiliation.

"Does he seem strange to you too, Corinne?" inquired Portia in a low tone. "I wish the doctor would come. I'm afraid he is very ill. Ah, there they are now!"

Corinne arose, somewhat comforted.

"I brought you a basket of provision," she said, "but perhaps we had better leave it all for him. You must go back with me, Portia. They won't want us. The little pony can carry us both. We are to start home in the morning."

"Let's wait and hear what the doctor says."

Dr. Savage's manner toward his patient was very cheerful, even light-hearted, but he evaded the serious questioning of the young ladies as they followed him to the gate. "It's a pity," he said, "there isn't a comfortable farmhouse near. It is rather hard on this Boston swell, this reformer and missionary of culture, to have to put up with such quarters. I hope Mallory didn't do it on purpose. I am afraid Uncle Hannibal and Aunt

Sara'll have more effect on him than he will on them." And then he went away.

"My new habit is just ruined, I see," said Corinne as they were starting. "And I don't suppose I'll ever get another."

"Yes; you shall have another, Corinne," said Portia. "I will do without a new dress this summer. It was all my fault."

The following morning, on the eve of their starting home, Salina and Julia had a quarrel. Julia wanted to go straight home, and Salina wanted to stop a few days at "Uncle Ingram's."

"I don't see what you want to stop any longer for," said Julia. "I don't see anybody worth associating with, and that's a fact — unless it's that Boston fellow, and he may be dead by this time. As for your Mr. Mallory, I can tell you now, your time's all wasted on him."

"Why is it?"

"Because it is. Ask Portia. I don't see, Corinne, how you manage to endure this stupid place. But then, you've never lived in the city, and don't know the difference."

"I can tell you why Jule's in such a hurry to be off," said Salina maliciously. "She's afraid you'll cut her out, Corinne, and with reason, too. Mr. Hardy says it would be dangerous for him to be with you much. And he says, too, that you are the prettiest woman he ever saw."

Julia tossed her head and returned — indeed

she didn't care what Mr. Hardy said or did. He might stay forever, if he liked. But she was more than ever bent on going home. She couldn't endure the stupid place a moment longer. And when she had invited each of her cousins in turn to go home with her — looking greatly relieved as each politely declined — she commanded Ned to drive straight on to L——.

Ned having exhausted his scant relish for rural sports, as well as the patience of the party, made no objections, and as nobody insisted on their staying, Salina's remonstrances terminated in an urgent message to Mr. Mallory to be sure to call when he came to the city.

Mr. Mallory sent his horse home by one of the party and drove the Ingram carriage. As the back seat was the more comfortable, Blanche gave up her usual place beside Corinne to Portia, and herself took the front seat beside Mr. Mallory. Portia appreciated this self-denial on Blanche's part, because she knew how reluctantly her sister placed herself beside the brilliant young man officiating as coachman.

It had often been a matter of wonder to Portia why Blanche did not like Mr. Mallory. That she did not, her actions seemed to declare. Whenever it was possible she avoided his presence. When they were unavoidably thrown together she was silent and constrained, or sarcastic, and sometimes even positively rude, as her mood chanced to be;

for Blanche was a briery creature. Whoever wooed Blanche, would get no help from her.

Mr. Mallory appeared entirely unconscious of anything unusual in her manner toward him. When Blanche avoided him, he respected her mood and did not urge himself upon her notice. If she was sharp and querulous, he gave no sign of resentment, maintaining the gentle courtesy with which he treated all women.

The ride home was a merry one, full of laughter and fun in which Blanche joined as heartily as any. But it was Portia whose merriment had real thought in it, and whose far-reaching flights were always a wonder to the few who really knew her.

It was this free, unhackneyed spirit in her which attracted Mallory. He left nothing unsaid that would provoke her to lively and even indignant defense. And Allerton was made the subject of many a jest that morning.

As soon as she could conveniently escape from the family conclave, assembled on the veranda for the purpose of "talking it over," Portia went to her room and fell upon the bed, tired out. Her cheeks burned, her limbs ached. She had kept up quite as long as she could.

Presently there was a knock on her door, and Blanche entered with a cup of tea. "I knew you must be tired," she said; "I hope you are not going to be ill."

"Oh! thank you, Blanche; it was the very thing

I was wishing for. It was so good and thoughtful of you." And Portia sat up and drank the tea, and ate the cakes.

"Good! oh, no! It is you who are good. I should have been cross and fretful, and made everybody unhappy, if I had felt as badly as I know you feel. Dear Portia" — putting her arms around her neck and kissing her again and again — "I love you more than you have any idea. And I love to see you admired and happy. But, Portia, it makes me miserable, sometimes, and I can't help it! I wish oh! I wish I could be as good and as sweet and unselfish as you are. But you and Corinne are both so pretty, and smart, and attractive, that I am jealous, or envious — or something dreadful. I know it's hateful. Forgive me, Portia — won't you?"

At first, Portia listened to this unexpected confession in amazement, but as Blanche went on, her pathetic humility and penitence touched Portia deeply.

"Blanche," she exclaimed, the ready tears starting to her eyes, "you must not say such things of yourself. Never! You are the best one of us, and the brightest. And please, Blanche, don't ever fancy that people are blind; that they cannot see who is the light and stay of this household. A pretty mess we'd be in without you, Blanche, to keep things going smoothly."

Blanche wiped away the sympathetic tears that

had started to her own eyes at sight of Portia's, and looked comforted, and a few minutes afterward Portia heard her light laughter coming up from the veranda below, where they all sat discussing the camping expedition.

For a long while Portia remained lost in thought. "And Blanche, too!" she murmured. "What a life is this! Can one take a step in no direction that it is not crossed by some other human being wishing to go there in her stead? Very well," and then she began to laugh; "take him, Blanche, take him! I'll be the old maid of the family and devote my leisure hours to literature and art."

And then she added more seriously: "Yes, mine is a solitary nature. I must belong to myself, think my own thoughts, live my own life, free from the little imperative rules and restrictions of the ordinary domestic life."

The weight of her seventeen years sat heavily on Portia. If she had been seventy she could not have felt older, more worldly-wise.

CHAPTER XX.

FROM BOSTON.

In the two weeks of pain and homesickness and desolation of soul which ensued Allerton realized that he was going downhill very fast.

He was impatient, listless, irritable and despondent by turns. He was sick to death of the glaring pictures on the wall, of the small, dingy windows, of the snuffy smell of the atmosphere — of everything.

"I'll never get well," he groaned, "until I get out of this miserable little coop."

"And you'll never get out," returned Dr. Savage, "until you have learned to exercise a little more patience under physical restraint. I thought you had more fortitude."

"Fortitude!" interrupted Allerton. "Fortitude to lie here on my back, when there is so much to do?"

"If you would only believe it, Allerton, the same Providence which has looked after the world these six thousand years, or so, will still be able to

get on almost as well as if you were there on the spot to help manage affairs."

"I know," returned Allerton, smiling involuntarily at the pretended scope of his manipulations. "If we are allowed to help occasionally it is entirely on our own account, I suppose, and not from any real need of our assistance."

"You know that; then take comfort in it. Your lying here, on your back, as you say, won't make much difference in the universe, and may make much to you. To make a successful battle you must have great skill — as even little David had acquired with his sling, defending his father's flock — or abundance of weapons: health, energy, enthusiasm, money and the like. I don't know about the money, but in other munitions of war you are just now sadly lacking."

Dr. Savage was a man of an original and independent cast of mind. He was a student of human nature, whose studies amounted to strong likes and dislikes. For awhile he had stood aloof from Allerton, viewing him askance, but the closer he drew to him, the better he liked him. And now, at the end of two weeks, a strong abiding friendship had germinated between them.

For awhile he came every day, then every other day, and at last said it would not be necessary for him to come so often, and remained away three or four days. At the end of that time Allerton was to die of impatience and loneliness.

As he lay there, composing his will, imagining the funeral and consequent grief of his friends and remorse of his enemies — meantime enduring with what patience he could the smoke from Aunt Sara's pipe — the old woman dropped Hannibal's shirt which she was mending — a thing she was ready to do on the slightest provocation — and exclaimed, "De land sakes! Ef da hain't de stylishest wagging a-comin'! Dess a-whippin' up! Foah hosses — no, two hosses, but spankin' big uns! An' a cullud driveh, an' cushings, an' a pow'ful fine gen'leman on de back seat. Lawsy, honey! you ain't a-gwine to try foah to go yit! You's pow'ful bad to-day, now ain't yo'?"

"It isn't likely I'll get any chance," said Allerton, though he brightened with hope.

Not well enough! He would go if he died on the way!

"Yes, seh! dis yeh am de place," Aunt Sara was saying in her most wheedling tones. "No, seh, he ain't so well to-day, seh. 'Pears mighty po'ly."

The prospect of losing a lucrative source of revenue induced this despondent view of the case.

Allerton stared as a rather heavy-set, well-dressed, elegant-looking gentleman entered the room and stood regarding him with a beaming smile, then he sprang up, with a glad look of recognition: —

"Prince Irwin!"

"Ah, you haven't forgotten old friends in your prosperity, I see," said Mr. Irwin, as they shook hands with all the ardor of long-severed friends.

"How good of you to come! How did you know I was ill? Or did you know it? Nothing has happened, has there?"

And his countenance, having run the whole gamut of the emotions, settled down at length into deep anxiety.

"Nothing has happened at home," said the other, sitting down by the bedside. "They are rather uneasy at not hearing from you for so long; that is all. And as I had nothing to do, I concluded to run down and look after you."

"That was very kind, Irwin, and I thank you more than I can say."

"Not at all. I only wanted an excuse to come. I have always wanted to know something about this part of the country. Your lines have fallen in pleasant places, Allerton. You have some devoted and charming friends here, I find."

"When did you arrive?"

"Yesterday morning. I would have come out immediately, but the people at the hotel could give me no information as to how or where I was to find you. At the clerk's suggestion I drove over to Mr. Ingram's, where I procured the necessary directions. I dined there." He laughed in keen appreciation of this propitious beginning.

"You did!"

Allerton was silent a minute or two, his mind occupied with the astounding picture of Prince Irwin entertained by the Ingrams *en famille*.

"A charming family," he continued, "especially the young ladies. It is strange to me that you are not in love with one of them. I never before fully appreciated the real heroism of your character, Allerton."

Allerton smiled faintly. Could he ever, after that, have the courage to lower Irwin's estimate of him by confessing his weakness?

"I met Portia on the lawn. She had her books and a box of water colors, and I knew her at once as your pupil. I inquired for her father; he was in the field, she said, but she would send for him. She turned and walked to the house with me, talking as easily and gracefully as any Boston girl. The dog rushed out and jumped against her with such frantic welcome that it was with difficulty she kept her feet. She merely pushed him away with a mild, 'Go away, Jack!' and brushing off the prints of his dusty feet, went on talking as if nothing had happened. Talk about the repose of your Vere de Veres! The natural calm of these Southern girls makes the studied civic breeding seem the merest affectation."

"You are eloquent!" said Allerton. But he was pleased that his friends had stood the test so well, though it did not alter his opinion of them in the least. He rejoiced more than ever that

they did not say "paw" and "maw," as the quaint old English pa and ma was frequently pronounced.

When Allerton had taken leave of Aunt Sara, and all the contents of his pocket-book, he was lifted into the carriage and propped up comfortably on the back seat, with Irwin beside him. As they drove slowly homeward they talked of Boston, and all the events, small and great, that had transpired since his departure.

Allerton sniffed the fresh air and looked at the tall trees and deep sky, and his heart was full of gratitude to his friend for rescuing him from the dark little cabin in which he had endured so much.

"See here, Irwin, you must stay all winter. The hot weather is over now — it will soon be October — and you can have your choice of rooms. Can't offer you anything very exciting, unless it's a fight now and then, but we can have all the new magazines and books, and the Boston dailies get here only three days behind time."

"Thank you very much, Allerton. I had thought of going to Venice again this winter, but I might spend the autumn here. I must go to some place. One can have too much of a good thing, even the rarified atmosphere of Beacon Hill. And I have had that now for three winters."

"I thought you had been in New York most of the time," suggested Allerton.

"Yes; but that's just the same. New York is bigger; that is all the difference."

Allerton laughed. "And wickeder?" he supplemented.

The next day Allerton was much better. He was able to sit up and to relate all his grievances, to which Irwin listened attentively. The public library, the colored school, the freedmen's dinner, total abstinence — all his schemes for the good of these ungrateful people, everything he had tried to reform, and he had tried to reform about everything.

When he was through, his friend laughed.

"I wonder these people have put up with you as well as they have, Allerton. They must have a personal liking for you, or they would have started you long ago. The public library, of course, is a good thing; good books are bound to make themselves felt. Books with souls in them — not selfish souls — have a silent, irresistible power not to be equalled even by personal influence. You must have your library, if I have to buy it myself. But the colored school, the social equality and the total abstinence, those are mistakes you have made, Allerton."

"Not the total abstinence, nor the colored school," Allerton insisted. "You don't understand the needs of this country."

"When the colored people are ready for schools they will be furnished them. No man is called upon to make a social martyr of himself. As for your colored dinner" — Irwin paused to laugh

again. "We don't invite our coachmen and footmen and butler to dine with us, though they may be excellent fellows. Social matters adjust themselves. You have no right to say who your neighbor shall choose for his associates. And when you are as old as I am, Allerton, you won't care. I was young and enthusiastic once, too. But I was never the genius of war that you are, Allerton. I remember Harry used to say you were just so at college. You would never rest content in your own beliefs, but wanted to share them with everybody, even though no one cared anything about them. You are a born reformer, and will never escape these collisions and struggles, however mild a clime you seek. You will always take them with you."

"Self-imposed duties have always their debatable boundaries," said Allerton. "It is true that no one asked me to do anything. They would even be glad to be let alone. And even a good action, when it is done in a drudging, grudging spirit, is an abomination of desolation. But if there is anything that is of national importance it is the temperance question and the colored schools. Drunkenness, as every one is ready to acknowledge, is the curse of this country. And if these ignorant, irresponsible people turned loose here among us, were not educated and taught self-respect, this country would soon become uninhabitable."

Mr. Lindley Prince Irwin was neither young

nor handsome. His complexion was dark, with an unnaturally ruddy cast. His dark eyes, in thoughtful moments, had a solemn, brooding expression. His voice was a deep bass, with a hint at tragic possibilities. His manners were refined, his movements characterized by a stately languor. Yet he was a thoroughly masculine man, of strong presence, of distinct individuality, and utterly incomprehensible, consequently thoroughly fascinating to women.

He was a gentleman whom Allerton trusted in every respect except where the favor of women was concerned. His own fine scruples, his tender reverence and purely disinterested courtesy, he vaguely suspected were subjects of secret amusement to Mr. Irwin, whose social experience embraced a long and brilliant record of conquests.

Irwin, who had travelled abroad a great deal, was cosmopolitan rather than Bostonian; as the true Bostonian rarely leaves home save from a profound sense of duty to himself or the world. Even in Allerton the purity of the type had been disturbed by the rugged discipline of military life.

CHAPTER XXI.

UNCONSIDERED TRIFLING.

ALLERTON found everything in a tangle at The Oaks. Left to himself, Claxton had fallen again — fallen deeper than ever, because of his long abstinence.

At college he had been keen, bright, attractive — foremost in everything. Witty, proud, popular, the admiration and envy of his class. How beautifully, how enticingly the gay life of wassail begins! how shamefully, how debasingly it ends!

At first Allerton had hopes of extricating him from the horrible slough. Firmly, but kindly, he had taken him in hand. "You must not go to the village to-night," he would say; and while Allerton's eye was upon him he did not go. But in the night he crept forth, and made his way to his paradise.

Once Allerton went after him, but the saloon-keeper refused to give up his victim, and so berated Allerton with oaths and vile epithets, as a "meddlesome busybody interfering with the

lawful business of other people," that, although obliged to beat a retreat, Allerton made a vow to fight the law that gave such power into such hands with all his strength.

"That fellow is beyond all human help," said Irwin. "Nothing but a miracle could save him now. Instead of holding out delusive hopes, you would better cry aloud, 'He who enters here, leaves all hope behind!'"

"If I fail, it is not because the thing is impossible. Evil is always open to defeat; only goodness is invincible: nor because God is reluctant to help — he is ever willing — but because of something lacking in myself. Even the disciples failed because of weakness. We are enlisted to fight against evil, and to conquer! When we go into battle with the right spirit, God will give us the victory."

Irwin politely suppressed a yawn. He remembered the day, in his callow youth, when such things appealed deeply to his heart; when he had strong impulses towards this phantasmal sort of warfare, and longings to wash the world clean, and dress it anew in Sunday clothes.

He had seen and heard and read a great deal since then. He was an advanced thinker, and quite aware of his own superiority. Yet the vainest delusion of man's heart was more interesting to him than God's word, because all that was divine in him was dead.

At the earnest entreaty of Mrs. Claxton and Sylvia, Allerton moved them into the overseer's cottage. He saw that their shame and misery on Claxton's account was only increased by his participation in it. And it must be confessed that he breathed freer when the shambling step and maudlin voice were no longer heard in his house. Could the wild, bibbling youths be made to see the strange, repulsive figures they are making of themselves, would their "good times" strike them as so grand, I wonder?

The first time after his recovery that Allerton went over to Mr. Ingram's, the whole family welcomed him with unusual fervor. All spoke very highly of his friend. Evidently Irwin had carried everything before him; especially Mrs. Ingram and Corinne, who both hoped he would always bring his friend whenever he cared to come. They repeated this "hope" until Allerton felt obliged, though with inexplicable reluctance, to introduce this portentous, high-stepping figure into his little drama — to turn him at large upon his little stage.

Irwin was a grand fellow, of course, but he took up too much room. He was always the hero of the story, and not always an irreproachable one. An attractive man like Irwin was not always to blame if foolish women fell in love with him, Allerton knew that, but he was not at all sure of Irwin's entire irresponsibility for the infatuation

of his victims. There was Mrs. Dare, who followed him to Venice, and came back soon after he came. She had defended herself very plausibly, but Society, though as gracious as ever to Irwin, had turned a decidedly cold shoulder on the reckless woman who had held in contempt its most sacred code.

Allerton felt his responsibility to the Ingrams for any possible harm that might come to them through a guest of his bringing, and observed his friend with a keener recognition than ever before of the one thing he lacked of being a perfect gentleman — absolute integrity.

"I did not approve of the war," he heard Irwin saying to Mr. Ingram the evening of their first visit — for they went in the afternoon, and staid to tea, after the approved country fashion. "I had some good friends in the South, and I felt sure they knew what they wanted, and what was best for them — better than the North did. I was for letting them alone."

A sense of uneasiness stole over Allerton. Irwin was a man of the world; refined, intellectual, well-bred, yet possibly tainted at heart with the touch of the world's callous fingers.

Yes, tainted. Though like some novels we read, so elegantly and fascinatingly glossed over that the unsoundness is scarcely perceptible.

Once before the thought of his intimacy with Bertha had focused his friend in this piercing light,

and even then he had found him wanting, though he could scarcely tell how.

"He is very nice," Corinne privately announced. "I hope you will always bring him when you come."

Allerton smiled. A sudden thought passed through his mind. Yes, these two worldly natures must certainly be congenial. He glanced over at Irwin, devoting himself with that assiduous, attentive air which he could assume at will, to the entertainment of plain, matter-of-fact Blanche, and saw that his friend was not indifferent to the impression he was making. Yes; it must be Corinne. It could hardly be Portia, who sat on the steps, absorbed in the new Scribner's Monthly which Allerton had brought, her back turned with frank indifference upon the fascinating Mr. Irwin.

After that Irwin always accompanied him — for the walk, he said — his presence making no difference in the group which they rarely failed to find on the veranda. Each went on with her work, undeterred by the presence of a stranger — if Irwin was ever regarded as a stranger. Allerton did not realize how high a compliment to himself this unquestioning acceptance of his friend indicated, because he did not know how cool it might otherwise have been.

Mallory was often there, usually engaged in ingenious efforts to beguile Portia from her books. One day he drove his two shining bays, "Dickens"

and "Scott." While all exclaimed over the superb animals, Mallory, passing Corinne and Blanche by, addressed himself to the silent figure in the remote corner: "Get on your hat; I want you to take a drive with me."

Portia looked up, startled. She had just finished her lessons, and was now poring over "Buckle's History of Civilization." "You mean Corinne, don't you?" she exclaimed, incredulous of such marked preference over her fascinating sister.

There was a chorus of derisive laughter from the others, who were listening.

"No, indeed; I mean you, Miss Portia Ingram."

"I — I don't know. I must ask mamma."

"You're sixteen, aren't you? Not too young to leave your mother for a couple of hours. No longer than it takes to recite your lessons down on the lawn in the shade."

"Go along, goosey!" called out Corinne. "Mamma don't care, and I'm sure no one else does."

"Do you want to go? That is the question," said Mallory. "You are not to go merely to please me."

"Yes; I should like to go. Thank you, Mr. Mallory."

"She was dying to go, all the time," said Corinne, when Portia had gone to get ready.

Portia was more reserved and more absorbed in her studies than ever since the camping expedition.

She talked more with Mallory, but apparently only because Mallory talked more to her. Evidently she preferred to be regarded as a schoolgirl absorbed in her studies.

She had become a complicated study to Allerton. He no longer felt sure of the mental processes through which she was passing. He had lost his clew; they were no longer *en rapport.*

He did not realize that he, too, had changed. That he was as strange to her as she to him.

"Who is this Mallory?" Irwin inquired on their way home. Irwin had hired a stylish "turn-out" from the livery stable, and they oftener drove now than walked.

Allerton explained Mallory's position and pedigree as far as he knew them.

"A haughty, high-tempered fellow," said Irwin. "The sort of stuff domestic tyrants are made of."

Allerton said nothing, and the subject was dropped.

Irwin had decided to remain all winter, but only as a boarder. He preferred the freedom imparted by paying his own way. Allerton might spend the money on whatever absurd notion he pleased.

That evening as they sat alone in the library Irwin resumed the subject dropped so suddenly during their drive home. "It would be a thousand pities," he said, "for a bright intellectual girl like Portia to marry a selfish, tyrannical fellow like that

Mallory, and be buried alive in a stupid country house. Southern men are as narrow-minded, where women are concerned, as Turks. They see no use in a woman's knowing anything outside the walls of her house."

"I don't know as they are far from wrong," said Allerton indifferently.

"Ordinarily, perhaps they are not. But Portia is not ordinary. She is a passionate idealist, and too intense for ordinary disposal. She would love with all her soul, and battle against everything in herself disparaged by her husband. Her life would be a long struggle against her own nature, settling down at last, when she had taken the full measure of her condition and its irreparableness, into hopeless bitterness of soul. For a hungry mind is not to be silenced by starvation.

"I didn't know you had been observing her so closely," said Allerton, with a surprised air.

"I saw all that at the first glance. I heard it in the first sound of her voice. With her, love will be life, and life no trifle."

"I thought you would like Corinne."

"Ah! Do you prefer Corinne?"

"She is very beautiful."

"Not half so lovely as her unfathomable younger sister. I have seen Corinnes enough, and to spare. Beautiful at full bloom, but growing harsh and unlovely as Time and Selfishness and Vanity set up their blighting record on their vacuous faces.

A Portia has never crossed my path before. A stately white blossom that dwarfs and bedims all others about it. When I look at her, so innocent, so good, so transparent, and yet so inscrutable, I feel all that is good and all that is noble within me brought to the surface."

"I wonder," said Allerton, with a laugh, "if she feels so deeply stimulated when she looks at you?"

But he immediately fell into a reverie, from which he at last aroused himself to say, "If she cares for any one it is Mallory, and that would meet with the entire approval of the whole family. But she is only seventeen, and doesn't really know her own mind yet."

"And you would sit still and allow a fellow like that to entrap a girl of her capabilities into marrying him!" Irwin regarded his friend with an air of reproof. "There are plenty of pretty, faithful little domestic animals who would be more than content with his little tread-mill; let him get one of them."

"I don't know as Mallory is any more selfish or narrow-minded than the rest of us. Besides, what have I got to do with it? If they are pleased, why should we complain?"

Yet he felt himself a hypocrite while giving utterance to the expression, without the courage to face the situation and set himself aright in the eyes of his friend and the world.

Allerton did not sleep much that night. He lay awake struggling with himself. Then suddenly in the midst of the storm and darkness came a clear, incisive thought that was like an electric shock. Why should he struggle against this feeling? Was there any real reason? What was to hinder him from trying his fate as well as another?

Portia had a real respect and regard for him, he well knew. And was not he as worthy of her, as calculated to make her happy, as Mallory or any one else she was ever likely to know?

He laughed to think how uselessly he had tormented himself. There were too many real evils in the world to expend his energies in fighting imaginary ones.

It is true he would not be as acceptable to her family as the other suitor, he reflected, but was he under bond to these people not to make love to their daughter?

He no longer questioned her fitness to be his wife, or her acceptability to his friends. The noble were noble under any sky; the place of birth and breeding made no difference. He loved Portia with his whole soul, just as she was; he experienced actual pain whenever he saw her interested in either Mallory or Irwin, even though he knew the latter gentleman's attentions meant nothing only the analytical interest of a student of human nature.

"Are you going with the gypsying party to-morrow?" he inquired of Portia next day, as the lessons came to a close.

"Yes, sir," she replied indifferently, gathering up her books. She had on a pretty organdie dress, and looked very lovely. Recently there had been a marked improvement in Portia's dress. She no longer wore the faded, cast-off clothes of her sisters.

"Are there chestnuts in Chestnut Hollow, or do you go merely to learn your future fate?" — A gay party of girls proposed to disguise themselves and enact the rôle of fortune-tellers.

"There are chestnut-trees, at least. I am not expecting to patronize the gypsies, who have their absurd stories all composed and ready for their victims."

"If the weather is pleasant" — with a feeling of bitter impatience and self-contempt he turned away toward the window as he felt a blush — yes, actually a blush stealing stealthily across his countenance. No; he would not ask her to go with him, and have her refuse with that cool, ironical air he had noticed in her recently. He had her respect as yet, and he meant to keep it — "if the weather is pleasant," he repeated, with a nonchalant, absent-minded air, "I shall take Sylvia, she is so anxious to go."

Mallory was on the veranda when Allerton went out, paying his respects to the parrot, hanging

overhead, while the others played at backgammon. Sylvester, with his head on one side, muttered in a despondent tone, "'Tain't Portia! 'tain't Portia!"

"No, you wretched bird," said Mallory, "'tain't Portia, and it won't be Portia all day to-morrow, for I am going to take Portia away. She is going with me where the birds have some music in their souls. But if you will promise to reform, Sylvester, and not be saucy to me any more, nor say good-by just as I arrive, we will bring you some chestnuts."

"Are you going to take Portia to-morrow? And how am I going?" said Corinne, in a complaining tone. "Who said Portia could go? It seems to me Portia is getting on rather fast for a mere schoolgirl?"

"She said so, and I said so. Isn't that enough?"

"Perhaps I may be allowed the pleasure of taking you?" suggested Irwin.

"Certainly," said Corinne, "if it will be any pleasure."

"And your sister?"

"Oh! Blanche is provided for. Blanche is the popular one in this house, for all her red hair and freckles."

As they drove homeward Allerton talked a good deal. He was determined not to give way to this late tendency to reverie. He said, among other

things, that he wondered why men in comfortable circumstances were so often in a hurry to get married. Marriage was always a risk, and more than half the time an awful mistake. He thought Irwin had acted wisely in remaining single.

So intent was he on disguising his own mood that he failed to remark the similarity of his companion's. Irwin was preoccupied, his answers mechanical, yet he laughed quite frequently, and seemed in high good humor.

CHAPTER XXII.

GYPSYING.

THEY went to Chestnut Hollow, and had a good time. Climbed trees, scratched their hands, tore their clothes, and brought home half a dozen chestnuts, which Sylvester had the pleasure of dispatching.

The mock gypsies in their gay dresses, big bonnets and tawny skins, were all so much alike that even their intimate friends could not distinguish them apart.

Everybody had their fortunes told. Corinne was to be engaged thirteen times and at last marry a lame blacksmith. Blanche was to have two husbands, and a dramatic domestic career. Portia would wed a Boston millionaire who was to die insolvent, leaving her at the tender age of eighteen, an impecunious widow. Irwin was to marry a Southern girl with an excessive taste for firearms, fox-hunting and horse-racing, who would create a regular panic along the Back Bay. Allerton would die an old bachelor, far advanced in

years. These statements were highly embellished with numerous startling incidents and revelations.

"I like these people," Irwin said to his friend at the close of the day. "They actually enjoy living. They are not eternally picking things to pieces to determine whether it is worth while to accept them or not."

"You will go to the dance in Mallory's woods next Thursday, then?" said Allerton.

Yes, Mr. Irwin was going. Moreover, he was going to give himself the pleasure of taking Portia Ingram if she would consent to go with him.

The morning before the picnic he strolled over to Mr. Ingram's alone. A short time after his arrival Corinne opened the library door the space of six inches and said, "Portia, Mr. Irwin wants to see you."

"I can't come," said Portia, scarcely glancing up from the geometrical theorem she was engaged in demonstrating.

"But you must, Portia. It isn't well-bred to treat a gentleman in that way. A friend of Mr. Allerton's, too!"

"I am coming, of course," said Portia hastily. "I meant that Mr. Irwin could wait a minute. I had almost got the answer to this thing."

"May I come in?" said a voice at the door. "I did not wish to interfere with your scholastic duties, but merely to ask if I might have the pleasure of your company to the picnic to-morrow?"

"Oh! thank you, very much," returned Portia, turning the leaves of her geometry nervously, "but I am not going."

"Not going?" returned Mr. Irwin, smiling slightly. "O, yes! I hope you do not mean to leave me to face a crowd of strangers alone. Your sisters are already provided with escorts."

"There are others," suggested Portia, with increasing embarrassment. "I am sure Sylvia Claxton would be delighted to go with you, or any of the Cavendish girls."

"But I am so unreasonable," he said, carefully curbing a redundant smile, "as to prefer you. I fear I should not be altogether satisfied with Sylvia or the Cavendish girls."

"I am sorry," replied Portia confusedly. "I hope you will have a nice time, but I — I have something else to do. I am rather behind in my mathematics. Well, I won't tell another fib," and with a nervous laugh she looked up into his face; "it is only that I have made up my mind to stay at home."

"Very well," with gentle courtesy; "I hope you will have a pleasant time," and bowed himself out.

"Portia, I am ashamed of you," said Corinne, when he was gone. "You've got no more manners than a chicken. What will Mr. Irwin think of us?"

"I didn't want to go. Was I to pretend that I did?" Portia inquired with an injured air.

"That isn't the question at all. You must think of what other people want, occasionally at least. We don't live in this world merely to do what we please."

That evening as Allerton and his guest sat on the terrace smoking their cigars, moonlight and the fragrance of blossoms all about them, a little colored boy came up and handed Mr. Irwin a note.

"Who is it for, boy?" said Allerton.

"Miss Po'tia say gin it to Mr I'win."

"Very well," said Mr. Irwin, putting his hand into his pocket. "Here's a dollar. Go and sit on the steps until I see if Miss Portia wants an answer."

In the note Portia apologized for her rudeness and said she would be pleased to go to the picnic with Mr. Irwin if he still wished it.

Mr. Irwin replied in pencil on a card, that she would find him at her door on the morrow at ten A. M.; but unless she found the prospect entirely agreeable, she was not to go.

As soon as the boy was out of hearing, he laughed. Then he explained the incident to Allerton, but made no comment.

He began to speak of his surprise at finding so much knowledge of literature and of the world in a small provincial place like this, and wondered why, in an atmosphere of general intelligence, no one had risen to distinction. So many

college-bred men, and yet not an author, not even a scholar among them!

"There is Gen. Witherspoon, whose name is scarcely known outside the State, who can tell you the style of writing characterizing each of our leading dailies, and not only knows the editors by name, but spoke of the ability and intellectual rank of each, with a justice of critical judgment rarely found even among their intimate friends."

"The lack of commercial activity leaves more interest for books, though intellectual tastes are not common here," Allerton answered. "They care more about horses and dogs, and purely objective pursuits, usually. The atmosphere is not literary. But a public library would broaden their range and elevate the tone of thought vastly. Good writers, modern ones who tell about things of the present day, are sure to be read."

"Even the lightest of novels," returned Irwin, in a discursive tone, "if pure and refined, will waken thought and people the vacant mind. To me it is positive anguish to come in contact with an empty, vapid mind. I will order a hundred books or so, to-morrow, as a beginning."

"Will you, Irwin? That is kind," said Allerton. But his enthusiasm seemed, even to himself, forced. "In their new struggle for the comforts of life," he added, "they are awakening to deeper intellectual life. They have plenty of energy if pushed to the wall."

"Yes, they are ready for the struggle; the sharper the better; but they are not going to worry themselves over trifles. There they have an advantage over New Englanders. They have liberal, easy-going consciences, not two-edged Damascus blades, handed down by hair-splitting ancestors and painfully sharpened by constant collision with meddlesome critics. One can live naturally, and in absolute comfort here."

"They seem to have taken to you readily."

"That is because I haven't found them all wrong and in want of making over," Irwin rejoined, laughing. "I like them as they are, and find their peculiar ideas, their soft, unhurried speech, and even their absurd pride, charming."

"Do you?" said Allerton, rather absently. Then he spoke of all he had heard and imagined of Southern women; their indolence and love of ease, their deficiency in self-sacrifice, devotion to duty, and other virtues supposed to be instinctive and habitual with New England women from their cradles up. Instead of this, he had found them as self-denying, as warmly sympathetic, as appreciative of duty as need be. Not strenuous, it is true, but always ready to help the really needy. Even Corinne thought nothing of sitting up all night with a sick neighbor, performing the most menial services, though the recipient might be neither pleasant nor grateful. He had never seen the sick more carefully tended, even in Boston.

Long after Irwin had left him and gone into the house, Allerton sat there, staring at the tall oaks looming darkly against the clear sky, an abstracted, dreamy expression in his eyes. It was only by a resolute effort of the will that he at last aroused himself and followed his friend into the house.

"Have you had a pleasant day?" Allerton inquired when his friend returned late in the evening.

"Delightful!" emphatically.

"What did you do?"

"Nothing: nothing whatever."

"Well, that was novel, though rather fatiguing, I fancy."

"In the first place, to escape those three screeching fiddles was comparative happiness. Then to recline on the shady bank of a picturesque stream, with an adorable little wood-nymph beside you, who searches fearlessly deep into your eyes and sees only the good in your nature — I found that most enchanting."

Prince Irwin glanced at his companion, who made no attempt at reply, and then went on talking.

"See here, Allerton, I can't understand this indifference of yours. How have you escaped the flying arrows of the little god? You must have the heart of a cynic, or the will of a stoic. Why,

case-hardened as I am, this little seraph in blue muslin, with red roses in her belt, is too much for me. I don't know why she refused me, for she has been charming all day. I am constantly forgetting the difference in our ages, and I don't believe she ever thinks of it. Intellectually she is very mature, and at times there is a quiet reserve about her which shows that she has experienced many a severe mental struggle. And yet, what a childish, happy laugh she has!"

"She is rather different from the others," Allerton replied mechanically.

"The others are not bad," continued Irwin. "Corinne is quite pretty, and has considerable social tact. And Blanche has the same fine courtesy and care for others that distinguishes her father. But Portia, besides all that, has a certain seductive depth and mystery about her that makes her absolutely fascinating to me. Her answers are always unexpected, and I am continually wondering what she will do next."

In the four or five weeks Irwin had spent in the South, he had changed a good deal. He was no longer nerveless and dull and blasé. This evening, especially, he was positively animated. The simple, healthful life he was living had brought back the clear, refined pallor — his natural complexion — previously somewhat muddled with wine, late suppers and other metropolitan dissipations.

"And then," continued Irwin, "she is so perfect physically. How did it happen that she has not pinched her waist after the unnatural fashion of her sisters? Where, in the reign of hoops and tight bodices, has she learned the beauty of lightly flowing drapery, and free, untrammeled movements?"

Allerton pushed back his chair impatiently. "I don't know what possessed Jupiter to build on such a fire here," he said, taking up the poker and scattering the sticks on the brass andirons. Then he took up his paper again. "I shall begin to believe you are in love with this Kentucky schoolgirl if you keep that up much longer, Irwin."

"I don't know that you would be far from the truth," Irwin acknowledged. "I am quite under the spell."

Lounging luxuriously in his easy-chair, Irwin looked at his friend's red face, and went on talking of Portia, her beauty, her innocence, her extraordinary sweetness and grace, and Allerton, listening involuntarily, recalled his own worship of this man, now even more accomplished, more fascinating in his wider knowledge of the world, than ever. He would exert himself to keep up the mysterious poetic halo by which he skillfully managed to surround himself, thought Allerton, appalled at the effect this genial, eloquent and exceedingly clever man of the world might produce on the immature, impressionable girl-nature.

Allerton and Harry Irwin had been classmates at Harvard. It was through Harry's glowing accounts of "my brother Prince" that Allerton's imagination had first been kindled to an almost equal enthusiasm. Then the invitation to spend the vacation at "my brother Prince's country seat on the Hudson," where the whole *menage* was placed at their disposal, completed the conquest. He was disappointed to find the munificent Prince abroad, but before the holiday ended he returned.

Having inherited a fortune from his mother, Prince Irwin, who was only Harry's half-brother, had increased it enormously by speculation, and then retired from the business which even in the flush of success he had despised, and for many years he had been known as a gentleman of elegant leisure in Boston and New York, and also somewhat in London, Paris and Venice.

"You should have seen them," he said, as Allerton concluded a graphic description of their doings during that delightful vacation to the group on the Ingram veranda. "When I dropped down on them unexpectedly one day, they had a dinner-party. All the dogs were in the dining-room, and Harry, holding aloft a turkey bone, was calling out: 'Speak for it, Blucher! speak for it, Loud!' and the dogs were leaping and yelping, and the boys applauding and laughing — a perfect pandemonium! And the soulless Comanches were dining off my fine Pallissy and decorated Haviland."

"We were young and green, then," said Allerton, "and had no idea dishes were ever made too fine to eat off of. The cook, too, was unaccustomed to cabinets and decorative ware, and I suppose Harry thought nothing too good for his friends, especially with the class-poet among them."

"We have some old blue plates that may be priceless, for aught we know," said Corinne. "Though I used to feel all broke up for the day if I had to eat off one. We'd sell them at a reasonable figure, doubtless."

In the close association of this present time, with his munificent host converted into his self-assured, politely cynical, though still fascinating guest, Allerton found the glamour of the past slipping rapidly away. He was finding out more and more of Irwin's real nature, and he did not consider that it improved on acquaintance.

He had always known him as an irreligious man, "settled on his lees," whom the possibility of influencing spiritually was a thing of the past, yet so interesting, so well-informed, so courteous and companionable that he had hitherto given himself up to the pleasure of his society without a thought of possible consequences. Their talk had always been on purely worldly matters. If Allerton ever gave it a more serious turn Irwin looked bored, and sometimes almost contemptuous.

It was too late now to regret the impulsive

invitation he had extended his friend in the first flush of joy at seeing something from Boston, as Irwin had accepted it in good faith, and furnished two rooms in luxurious style, and evidently established himself for an indefinite season. Allerton could not ask him to pack up his traps and leave, especially after the confession he had just made.

"This comes," he exclaimed angrily to himself, "of having a friend of whom you cannot conscientiously approve; a man incapable of understanding, or of seriously considering, even if he did understand, his duty to God and to his fellow-man."

To his own mind it was clearly his duty to put the Ingrams on their guard, especially Portia; to open their eyes in regard to the character of his friend, and the trivial nature of his attentions. She and they would consider him jealous, absurdly and unwarrantably so, but that made no difference in the duty which must be done at any cost of pride, or dignity, or personal consideration of any sort. That was what it meant to be a Puritan!

As for him, he would fight this senseless infatuation down. Had he not decided that domestic happiness would not be the best thing for him? That he would work better, quit himself more nobly if he worked, like Paul, with an eye single to the glory of God?

From that time he reasoned, he jeered, he struggled with all his might against the tide — as

inevitable as the tide of the sea. He loved her; he longed for her love, and was wretched at the thought of giving her up. The thing he had scorned as an idiotic weakness had happened to him!

"Not happy? What a pity!" he exclaimed in inexpressible scorn, whenever he found himself sinking into a pathos of self-pity. Ready to die, because a girl wouldn't love him! A heroic condition indeed!

Once she was his — he could have sworn it; and he had held aloof, calculating whether or not she would make him a suitable and acceptable wife. Now she had passed beyond his reach.

That was the sharpest pang of all. He hated the egotism that made him undervalue her when she was within his reach. Now he began to realize the real pettiness of the barriers which he had considered insurmountable. Was a lovely and innocent girl any the less desirable as a wife because she had never seen an opera, knew nothing about the use of finger-bowls, and took no account of the letter *r*? A nature that was rare in its strength, its grace, its refinement, and, more than all, in its power of loving! And he had cast aside this precious jewel because of the fashion of its setting.

At last he began to see how vain a task he had set himself. "Fly, fly, oh, Telemachus!" exclaimed Mentor when he saw the son of Ulysses

in a like predicament. "For love is only conquered by flight. Against such an enemy, true courage consists in fear and retreat."

But he was not quite so weak as that. He would stay and bear it. He could never give up a serious work — plans of real and vast importance — for so unsubstantial and purely personal a reason.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LETTER.

ALLERTON spoke his word of warning against his friend, uncomfortably conscious of two clear eyes inspecting him the while. What she thought of him and his warning he could not guess; she had grown strangely reticent in expression as well as in speech.

When he was through, she said, "I thought he was your best friend."

"His brother Harry was my friend at Harvard, and I always admired his brother Prince. But now I have no intimate friend. That belongs to youth."

"Indeed!" observed Portia briefly. Then she laughed. "I am neglecting my privileges, it seems. I have no friend, either."

"A good, safe friend is hard to find," he remarked cynically.

"Goodness is not always attractive to me, I am sorry to say," Portia returned morosely.

"Then it is not real goodness, but hypocrisy;

or a lukewarm negation from active evil that is intolerable even to the Almighty."

"I know Mr. Irwin isn't very good, but how is a man to grow any better if good people shun him? Papa likes him; he thinks he is a man of fine feeling. Mamma says he is the nicest Yankee she ever met. Corinne and Blanche are charmed with him, and I, too, think him interesting."

"Irwin will be pleased to learn that he has made such a favorable impression all around," he returned, with subdued irony. He was deeply hurt and annoyed. He had spoken against his friend to no purpose. She thought him mistaken, perhaps jealous. Well, he had done his duty. Henceforth he washed his hands of them.

"Will you have the pleasure of my company down the avenue?" inquired Corinne as he was starting. "I've got something to show you."

"Certainly," he returned, glancing at the letter she carried in her hand with more impatience than curiosity.

"I want you to cast your eye over this beauteous missive which I received yesterday. Corinne seemed in high good-humor. "I would like to know what you think of it."

Allerton read the letter she handed him with a look of amazement. Then he began to smile. "Is it possible! And all this while he's been pretending. Well, you've made a wonderful conquest. Prince Irwin is one of the most fastidious of men."

"You didn't think he could fall in love with me, did you?" Corinne said, with her eyes down.

"Yes; I thought he would at first. Then I wondered that he did not. And he has been throwing dust in my eyes all this time!"

"Pretending not to like me?"

"O, no! Certainly not. Well, I congratulate you."

"And you approve?"

"Of Irwin's subjection, yes. Of anything farther or more serious, I have no right."

"But I—I really fear this conquest is not mine," said Corinne, bending her head over the letter and smiling softly to herself. "Does it sound to you as if addressed to me?"

Allerton stared. His face grew momentarily more rigid. "Didn't you say the letter was yours?" he asked, with a scowl, which fortunately Corinne did not see.

"Well, it is mine, unless some one else can establish a better claim to it. I found it in a book Mr. Irwin lent to Portia. It had no envelope, nor address of any kind."

"There was no address—nothing to indicate for whom it was intended?" He measured his words, but they had not the cool, judicial sound he intended. Corinne cast a rapid glance at his face and the mischievous expression vanished from her own.

"The letter was as it is now," she said, a shallow assumption of dignity covering abject alarm.

"Then whose is it?" he demanded. "Why are you showing it to me if it is not yours?"

"I only did it for fun, and it wasn't a bit of harm," exclaimed Corinne, facing him fearlessly. "I thought it a good joke on Portia, and a lesson, too, for her carelessness. I see nothing to be so stern about." But her head went down again, and she furtively dashed away a tear.

"Of course you can read other people's letters if you like," he said, not looking at her again, "but I beg of you not to make me a party to any such proceeding again. I have never read a letter not my own, so far, except by honorable permission, and I certainly have no desire to begin now."

Corinne was deeply mortified; but before they separated Allerton made amends for his harsh tone. He would gladly have dispensed with Corinne's preference, but he could not bear to wound her unnecessarily.

Corinne returned slowly and thoughtfully to the house. The suspicion that Allerton loved her sister had several times before sent a fierce flash of jealousy through her heart. But then, it seemed so unlikely that he could possibly prefer Portia to herself! After watching them covertly and detecting nothing more than a mere commonplace friendliness between them, she had decided at last that her suspicions were groundless. But now the old jealousy and pain returned more violent than before.

"Here is your letter, Portia," she said, throwing the missive on the library table. "I read it before I knew what it was. I thought the writing was Mr. Allerton's — an exercise, or something of that kind."

"I intended to show it to you," said Portia, looking up at her sister with heightened color. "What does it mean?"

"I think the meaning is plain enough. He is in love with you."

"O, no!" she exclaimed with a startled air. "You are mistaken, Corinne. Don't you see," and she began to laugh, "that there's nothing real in it? You slander the mighty Prince Irwin, I'm sure. It is only some intricate Boston joke."

"He is in love with you, Portia," insisted Corinne. "And it is a wonderful conquest; Mr. Allerton admitted that himself. Mr. Irwin is the most fastidious man in Boston, he says."

"Did Mr. Allerton think he was — was in love with me?" Portia asked, gazing straight before her.

"Yes."

"And what did he think of it?"

"He evidently thinks the young lady who gets Mr. Irwin will be a wonderfully lucky person," Corinne answered evasively.

"Why, he is old! He is growing bald, and has ever so many gray hairs in his head!" exclaimed Portia, in a tone of indignation.

"So much the better," said Corinne. "He is past the bullying age. One could live peaceably with a considerate, reasonable man like Mr. Irwin. He isn't always wanting to exact impossible things of one. He would be satisfied with a mere human being who is no better than himself."

Allerton walked home rapidly. Mr. Irwin was smoking on the terrace, and reading one of Mrs. Whitney's novels. "See here," said Allerton abruptly, "are you in love with Portia Ingram?"

"Come," said Irwin, looking up into the calm, portentous face of his friend curiously, "are you the young lady's guardian as well as her tutor?"

"Yes; I am any young lady's guardian if I see a selfish, designing man trying to make a fool of her."

"You are excited, Allerton, and I am not going to hold you accountable for all that your words seem to imply. I am not as good a fellow as you are, perhaps, but I would be just as far from doing anything dishonorable."

"You do not mean to say you are going to marry her?" Allerton sat down, assuming a careless conversational attitude. Excited, indeed!

"Why not? I believe she would make a good man of me," said Irwin, flipping the ashes off his cigar in a meditative way.

"Oh! doubtless," exclaimed Allerton, with something very like a sneer.

"I actually begin to feel pious. I love to go to church. I am beginning to have a sort of longing to live for the good of the world."

"You love her, I suppose?" in the tone of a prosecuting attorney.

"Certainly. Do you think I would marry a woman I did not love? And it is the kind of love that will last; mild and deep, and founded upon a knowledge of character."

"On both sides?" inquired Allerton with malevolent irony.

"I hope so," Irwin returned with an air of conscious virtue, which made Allerton want to knock him down. "That is the chief good of a wife — to understand and to know how to manage her husband."

In the silence which followed was heard the voice of the cook's intimate friend who had dropped in for a two hours' chat: "I 'tends my chillun to lun evy'thing white folkses chillun luns, ef I has to wash ev'y day o' my life — yes, an' don't git but a nickel a day! My chillun's got to hab a edgication, sho's you bawn, honey."

He had brought them up to that! How pleased, how thankful he ought to be! Education was now their ambition, their one absorbing theme.

Allerton stood up. "I must go and see about those boys that have been getting into the garden," he said, and his face had a tired look.

After he was gone a broad smile broke over

Irwin's face. "Poor Allerton! He would never make his fortune as an actor. The most flagrant case of besotted infatuation I ever saw, and yet he thinks it a profound and fathomless secret. Poor old ostrich!" and he shook with smothered hilarity. "Well, who can blame him?" and a tender smile displaced the mirthfulness. "That child, that simple, exquisite child has put new life into even these dry bones. Such youth and grace and innocence! It is a pleasure to love her. To watch her surprise, her alternate sweet confidence and dainty shrinking. It is a plunge into the fountain of youth, from which one comes out pure and ready to begin the world over again on a simpler, kindlier plan. And Allerton, in his fathomless egotism and conceit, had made up his mind that she was not good enough for him! Well, I have opened his eyes, and I intend opening them wider still."

Irwin persuaded himself that he experimented on his friend's feelings merely for his own good — to teach him a wholesome lesson. But if the occupation had not been a fascinating one, he would have retired to his own agreeable apartments and left his morose host to his unwonted absorption.

"When I found myself actually in love," he said, having gently led the conversation around to that point, "I was very uneasy for fear you had been before me. It seemed incredible that you should have missed the charm. I was quite miserable

until I had searched her artless nature thoroughly. You had come first; you were the first young man she had been thrown in contact with, and it seemed more than likely that she had fallen a victim to your charms. You are young, handsome, and can be quite fascinating when you like" —

"Oh! come," interrupted Allerton impatiently. "And you found" —

"Her young affections intact. Allerton, I am amazed at your forbearance; I revere your unselfish devotion to the good of the human race, or your obtuseness, whichever it is."

"Well," glowering at the book he held, as if impatient to get back to his reading, "never mind me. I prefer to hear of yourself. You — you are engaged?"

"Engaged! Now that shows how little you know of the girl's real nature, after all. She is as shy as a wild bird, and shyest when the attraction is strongest. She knows so little of the real world, and almost nothing of herself! She will never know the actual depth of her own nature until a congenial marriage has scattered her apprehensions and assured her that entire safety, as well as a great deal of felicity, awaits the wedded lovers who are really congenial. She is not one to give up her freedom easily. She will contend for every inch of it."

"I know," said Allerton, in a constrained voice. "She has an idea of being independent, of making

her own living. She would find it much harder than she imagines."

"Yes; women are hurt and deterred by things that are nothing to men. They shrink and fail where men would only be stirred to more resolute action. It was never intended that women should work."

"'Men must work and women must weep,' you think. I differ with you. They are likely to weep if they do not work, I admit."

"Women are naturally diplomatic," continued Irwin, waiving argument. "The simplest woman, if put to it, can deceive the wisest man. I haven't the slightest idea what she is going to say when I flash the astounding proposition upon her startled mind. I know that she feels the subtle warmth and magnetism of my great admiration for her, and that she is not repelled by it, though she treats me with only a trifle more consideration than she treats that Jack — Spratt, or whatever his name is."

"Oh! don't do it, Irwin," cried Allerton, starting up, with a look of pain. "She would not be happy. She is not fitted to be a society woman. She has lived such a simple, unworldly life! And then, you might not be as well satisfied as you think. You might get tired of her simplicity. The stare of the world would frighten her. She would not appear easy and natural as she does here in the familiar seclusion of her own home."

As Allerton spoke these words he was busily engaged in turning over the books on a table behind Irwin, as if searching for something. But Irwin did not need to see his face.

"Allerton, you are the stupidest man, in some respects, to be so wise in others, that I ever saw. Would Portia Ingram be any more of a lady if she had been studying Greek and Latin and German philosophy all her life? Would she have a kindlier grace, a sweeter sympathy with all human life, if she knew Emerson, Carlyle, Ruskin, Froude, Herbert Spencer and the whole business by heart — even if she had Chopin, Schubert, and all the thirty-six Bachs at her fingers' ends? We are just like the rest — no better, no worse; only a little more polished or varnished. Portia has a native refinement and adaptability that would bring her at once to the summit of any degree of civilization. Place her in New York or Boston society at the height of the season with the support of a faultless wardrobe and your own admiration, and in three weeks no one would know, except for her softness of speech, that she was not born and bred there."

Allerton sat down again and opened the book on Fish Culture, which he had taken up at random.

"You regard women from too remote a standpoint to know anything about them," continued Irwin. "You talk philosophy and metaphysics to them, and make your individual investigations through a field-glass from a decorous distance."

Allerton's smile was rather ghastly.

"She is just what I have been looking for all these years. I never intended to marry a society woman. The first time she looked at me with her unworldly eyes I knew my time had come. You need not smile so sarcastically. Nothing I ever experienced before was anything like this. The trouble is, I like her too much. It makes me uneasy sometimes. How is it possible you haven't found out how remarkable she is? There seems to be no limit to her mental powers. Nothing appears beyond her grasp. You can mention nothing that she has not a sufficient clew to follow you to any height or depth. I am amazed at her knowledge of things that we consider sacred to the elect. When you think you have traversed her whole intellectual circuit and got all her boundaries by heart, a new vista suddenly opens up before you, leading off into inscrutable distances."

"You forget that I have been teaching her for the past year and a half," said Allerton with a forced smile.

"Sure enough! And you have done well. I thank you with my whole heart, for that, and for preventing her from falling in love with her teacher."

"Preventing? What do you mean?" said Allerton with a startled expression.

"She told me all about it. She knew — that is, she had the impression that you were afraid she

would fall a victim to your charms. Yes," and Irwin nodded and smiled good-humoredly, "she knew you tried once or twice to give her warning."

"She did!" cried Allerton in utmost amazement.

"Come, there's no need of speaking so loud, Allerton. You'll have your darkies listening at the key-holes. They do that, don't they?"

"And what did you tell her?"

"I admitted that it was not beyond you; that you were a Spartan for courage. And I assured her that it was not a matter of vanity, but of conscience."

Allerton put down his book, clasping his arms at the back of his head, and, fixing his eyes steadily on the photograph of Turner's "Venice" which hung above the mantel, waited for the sudden numbness and dizziness to go away.

"If you will excuse me, Irwin," he said after awhile, "I'll go to bed. I'm rather tired, and my head aches."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DIFFICULT DECISION.

THEY had never had a Christmas-tree before, and Allerton felt repaid for all his trouble when he witnessed the subdued joy of the audience. A good many white people, especially young ladies, had contributed books, toys, and articles of personal adornment, and Irwin had furnished an abundance of confectionery.

There was much ceremony before the distribution of presents began; prayer and singing and a great shaking of hands. The white people were there only as spectators, and occupied back seats.

There was something pathetic in the mute ecstasy with which the children received their toys. The staid fathers and mothers had much ado to restrain their exuberant joy over their treasures. Only the servants of leading families, arrayed in the cast-off finery of their masters and mistresses, bore themselves with lofty indifference: "'Kase we allus has Krismus at home, an' 'ceives presents fum mastah an' missus — raal nice dresses, an' de lak — an' no furse made obeh it."

These aristocrats pretended to abhor a "furse." "Oh! dese obstreperous niggahs; day'll dribe me plumb 'stracted wid day noise."

Allerton tried to laugh at them with Corinne, but failed. Neither could he smile and bow and speak pleasant words to this one and that, as did Blanche and Portia. Somehow the scene made him sad.

He felt old. His youth seemed to have slipped quite away. The heavy burdens of life were already adjusted to his strong shoulders. Before long his strength and vigor would begin to fail, and then he would soon stoop under the weight.

He felt alone. No one seemed to think that he had any personal wish or hope. The general impression seemed to be that he was entirely absorbed in the wishes and cares of others. This was a high testimony of the esteem in which he was held; a lofty tribute to his unselfishness of character, and he ought to have rejoiced over this signal victory over their prejudice. But instead a heavy sense of responsibility weighed him down, a baffled heart-hunger asserted itself and almost drove him wild.

"What selfishness!" he said to himself angrily. "Come, now, have the courage to do without happiness; to be content with work. It is no more nor less than the common lot. Though others smile and speak gayly, it is no sign they are free from care. Each, doubtless, has his secret pack, though some have more skill in concealing it than

others. Spiritual power is secured only through suffering. To rise above the commonplace one must know the meaning of anguish. Who would live at ease, like the stalled ox?"

Yes, even the prophets shrank with dismay from the high calling thrust on them, and hid themselves or fled the country to escape their difficult mission. The cheap, ignoble plan of life had its attractions even with them.

And Portia? What were her thoughts now that she found herself drawn out of her little niche into a new world of thought and feeling?

She was only seventeen; all within was as yet nebulous: nothing clear or definite. Against Allerton she had long ago closed and barred her heart. The slightest quickening of personal interest only reminded her of past mortification and humiliation. "At least, I shall not make that mistake again," she resolved. Any indication of interest of feeling on his part she attributed to irritation, absent-mindedness, or a thrill of remembered pain because of her resemblance to the love of his youth, or to her own too ready imagination. The kindling of intellectual enthusiasm, experienced only in his company, if observed at all, would have been, "Only because it was he who taught me to think, and gave my imagination wings."

As for Mallory, she knew how unselfish and disinterested his friendship was. They were good comrades; that was all. Yet his open preference

gave her more pain than pleasure, because she knew how it stung her sister. Poor Blanche! It was wholesome discipline, doubtless, but Portia did not wish to represent an unpleasant means of grace to her sister.

Had she only known it, even Prince Irwin experienced a similar pain, became secretly uneasy and restless, and lost somewhat of his usual self-confidence whenever he saw her with Mallory. They seemed so happy together, so well suited to each other.

With Irwin's preference she was naturally pleased and flattered. He knew so much; had seen everything; knew even the grandest people, and yet he was content with her! And the sweet wonder with which she sometimes listened to his fluent speech was the most exquisite flattery the sated man of the world had ever known.

As time went on and Irwin sought her society more and more, the sisters left her alone with him in the library or parlor, when ofttimes deep thrilling looks, strange whispered words, would startle Portia from her Platonic dreams, and then for awhile she shunned him and held herself aloof as if the very air about him were charged with danger.

It was then that Portia was most fascinating to Irwin. Patiently he wooed her confidence. He told her of his home, his relatives, his circumstances, his habitual occupations and amusements.

Frequently during long rides or drives he sought to convey to her mind a distinct impression of the state of his feelings. He wished to familiarize her with the thought before he asked her to be his wife. And thus the winter passed rapidly away.

It was in the happy spring-time, when all the air was full of the scent of apple-blossoms, the hum of bees, and the song of birds, that Prince Irwin, with his air of proud humility, his look of simple fervor, declared his love and his ardent wish that she should be his wife. He felt sure the thought was no longer strange to her, and, he hoped, not unacceptable.

What was his astonishment, then, to see her start up with a sudden panic and pallor, as if to rush away and thus to make her escape, and then, recollecting herself, sit down speechless.

"I thought you knew," he said, more disappointed and crest-fallen than he could have imagined. "I have thought so much about it myself it seems strange that every one should not know. I had endeavored to make the thought familiar. I hoped" —

He paused, discouraged, and began to break into pieces a bit of cross-vine they had been examining.

"I — I had no thought. It seems so strange," she murmured, her face averted.

Irwin dropped the bit of stick, his face brightening. "Never mind, then," he said soothingly. "Do not answer now. Think it over and let me

know to-morrow or next day, or whenever you are in the mood to decide; that is, if you decide in my favor; if not — never let me know."

"But I must. And I am afraid thinking it over will do no good," cried Portia with an excited laugh. "I am not at all suited — you have made a mistake. You would soon find it out, and would wish you had never seen me."

"Ah!" exclaimed Irwin, with his urbane smile. "Trust all that to me. If you can only find it in your heart to love me a little, I promise you nothing else shall go wrong. Will you not try, Portia? You have no idea how I could love you, if I dared, and how I would delight in clearing your life of every care; in keeping your heart and mind free for the pure and lofty and beautiful things of life."

"Oh! I am afraid," exclaimed Portia, with a fleeting glance at the handsome, animated countenance so near her own, and all the vanished color returned in a rosy, rushing tide. "I don't know what to say; I must think it over — I must think it over a long time. I shouldn't want to leave my father. O, Mr. Irwin! I cannot leave my father. He would not be happy without me."

"I love your father, too, and I think your mother likes me. And we would have them with us half the time, at least. Their happiness should be mine as well as yours. You do not dislike me, Portia?"

"O, no!" with a quickly withdrawn glance.

"You like me?"

"Yes," with her eyes held resolutely down.

"I took the liberty of bringing you a little present."

Portia's eyes came up all curiosity as he took from a diminutive morocco case a small pair of ear-rings set with tiny emeralds.

"How lovely!"

"And will you wear them?"

"Oh! I couldn't, indeed. What would Corinne and Blanche and all of them say?"

"As I have brought some for Corinne and Blanche, too, they could not say anything. Here are theirs."

"Theirs are pretty, too," said Portia ingenuously, "but not near so lovely as mine."

"Let me put them in," petitioned Irwin mildly.

Portia glanced at him furtively. He was not at all eager. He looked almost bored. She turned a small pinkish ear, almost the color of the apple blossoms overhead, leaning slightly toward him, while he adjusted first one and then the other.

By this time both became aware of approaching footsteps on the gravelled walk.

"Oh! it's Mr. Allerton," cried Portia. "I had forgotten all about my lessons. I am really afraid I don't quite know them."

Allerton was obliged to go forward with all that rage and misery surging in his heart, and to speak in a careless, casual fashion, as if he had seen

nothing but trees and grass and birds and sky. All the color went out of his face, but he went forward, smiling.

He ought to have been prepared for this, but he was not.

It does not help to have thought over the pain that is coming. The agony of the dagger thrust is not the less keen from anticipation.

Portia was too confused and excited on her own account to observe his looks.

"Don't you intend to notice my new ear-rings?" she inquired, as they all three walked to the house together. "Here are Corinne's and Blanche's. But don't you think mine much the prettiest?" she added.

A mingled feeling of wounded pride and disgust came to his aid. All his life he had heard of the delicacy of womanly instinct. Where was the delicacy in this he had just witnessed? She had accepted jewelry from this stranger, this man of the world, with so much of its dust clinging to his garments.

Allerton dispatched the lessons with what brevity he could, and went home alone, not waiting for Irwin.

"It is the same world," he assured himself, wondering a little over the strange, unreal look of the familiar scene. "Millions in it are still stretching out their poor hands for help. Shall one being consume all the strength of my life?"

What had happened to him? He had put aside a precious thing, thinking he had no use for it, and now he could not take it up again, though to possess it had become his one desire. No, it was gone forever.

Had he not other things as precious — health, money, dear friends, and the hope of a useful career?

He could find comfort in none of these things. He was hurt to the very soul. He could decide on nothing. His will seemed paralyzed, his judgment asleep, but his heart, that alone remained awake and alert with the strange, keen energy of anguish.

Is this the earnest, determined, wide-awake fellow who came down here a couple of years ago, prepared to do, to be and to suffer anything and everything for the good of his enemies?

He had found the altar of sacrifice, and the enemy for whom he must suffer most, was one of his own household.

Now, why was it that this idle, useless *dilettante* could so easily win the confidence of women? What good had he ever done in the world? Had he ever denied himself one single dear desire? had he ever given of his abundance to the needy? lent assistance to a languishing cause, upheld the weak with his strength, or done any good work with his ten talents?

Yes, this great cormorant! what had he done

but live on his income, and indulge himself to his fullest bent?

Such were the vivid thoughts that asserted themselves in the darkness and confusion of Allerton's mind.

The days which followed were wearisome ones. He worked even more toilsomely than before, but his old satisfaction in his work was gone.

The lessons went on as vigorously and unremittingly as before. If Portia was in love it did not interfere with her studies.

These lessons began to represent the only important part of his life to Allerton. The rest was purely mechanical. His one thought all day long was Portia. While he went through the usual formula of questions, and pushed onward into higher research than the text-book suggested, reckless, demoralizing riot and mutiny were going on within.

Portia began to have the impression that she was watched. Was it anger, absent-mindedness, or mere curiosity as to her present state of mind? she wondered.

"We used to be friends," she thought sadly. "Once he even thought me like Amy, but now he finds me very different from what he at first imagined. He likes me less and less. Perhaps it would be the same with Mr. Irwin. I do not wear well; that is the trouble," and she sighed, and dropped into perplexed reverie.

Once, a keen, deep-searching glance sent an angry flush across her face. "He despises me as a silly, love-sick girl! That is it," she thought indignantly.

The present excitement of her emotional life made Portia beautiful. Her quiet reserve had vanished. She was full of gay mockeries. A vivid, sparkling mental restlessness, very alluring to one under her thrall, had taken possession of her.

Allerton took note of each fitful mood. Had she seemed like this before, could he have remained so long ignorant of his own feelings, he wondered?

Yet alone, Portia was sometimes sad and heavy-hearted.

Her dress, too, had assumed a more poetic form. The pale-tinted organdies and old laces which Corinne and Blanche, in a gush of generosity, had divided with her, gave her beauty the dainty setting it had before so sadly lacked.

After that first signal of distress had warned him of the presence of danger, Allerton no longer felt secure in her presence. So long as she remained unconscious, no harm was done by this daily contact unless to himself. But now he began to seek an excuse for discontinuing these perilous lessons.

He knew well enough he had many personal advantages over his rival. He knew, too, that Irwin was one of the most subtle of flatterers, and what was the judgment of seventeen? "Even

now, I might win her from him," was the tempting thought that flashed through his brain.

Once admitted, the tempter kept at him continually; breathing into his ear a thousand insidious fallacies, until at length he resolved to quit the place, to put himself beyond the reach of all these treacherous, dazzling delusions.

Impossible to conquer love? It should not be impossible. What was life without truth and honesty and honor?

CHAPTER XXV.

FORSAKING THE OLD IDEALS.

"WON'T it be nice when Portia is Mrs. Irwin, and a Boston society lady?" said Corinne enviously. "Who could have dreamed it? I am going to visit you in your palatial home, Portia."

"I am not there yet," said Portia, drooping her head over her work. The drawing-book was now displaced by various articles of personal adornment. Portia, her sisters said, was growing vain and frivolous.

"But you will be," said Corinne quickly. "You would never be so stupid as to refuse a chance like that. I don't see why it couldn't have been me. You don't care anything about that sort of life, and it would just have suited me."

"I don't see why it wasn't you, either," said Portia in unaffected wonder and self-depreciation.

"A little beauty goes a great way with men," said Blanche cynically. "If it hadn't been for the saintly cut of your face, Portia, you would never have had your lovers. You are too reserved."

"Lovers, Blanche! You wander. I never had the shadow of a claim to but one, and that one doubtful."

"You know Mr. Mallory likes you, and Mr. Allerton, poor fellow!" — laughing — "was only waiting for you to mature, to get your growth as it were. He's terribly put out about it."

"O, Blanche! how mistaken you are," cried Portia almost wildly. "Don't ever say, or even think a thing like that again. Mr. Allerton has always liked Corinne better. He was actually afraid I should fall in love with him. Please, Blanche, don't ever hint such a thing again."

"Well, I sha'n't. I don't care anything about it."

The long pause which followed was broken at length by Corinne. "There!" she exclaimed, dropping her work with a look of disgust, "I've got to pick out all those stitches. This is only the third time."

"You have a couple of lovers yourself, Blanche," resumed Portia aggressively. "How many more should you like?"

"Two fiddlesticks!" cried Blanche contemptuously. "Do you call Fred Crugar a lover? Selfish, empty little demijohn! Somebody's told him I am smart or witty or something of the kind. As for Jack Snead — I suppose you mean Jack — nobody ever thinks of taking Jack seriously, and he knows it. Jack seems only made to laugh at."

"If you imagine Mr. Crugar considers himself in need of being told anything, you're very much mistaken. There is nothing Mr. Crugar doesn't know, intuitively, and at first sight. I wasn't thinking of Jack, either. It never occurred to me that Jack could fall in love."

"Who were you thinking of, then?" asked Blanche with some curiosity.

"Why, Hugh Middleton. And I don't see why you are not in love with Hugh. He is so unobtrusively devoted."

"Fie, Portia! You're trying to make me vain, aren't you? I might like Hugh better if I didn't know he was in search of a good, brisk domestic to keep his house in order, and to look after missing buttons. I scorn such prosaic mercenary love-making."

"I don't believe he calculates any more closely and practically than the rest of them. They all want to receive fair equivalent for what they give."

"Well," after another meditative pause, "who else, Portia? That is only one."

"Mr. Mallory."

"Portia, for shame! I know now that you're poking fun at me. You did that out of pure revenge for what I said about Mr. Allerton. Well, I'll say a little more. You were at one time quite as much in love with him as he with you. I saw that plainly."

"What a detective you have grown, Blanche," exclaimed Portia, laughing, but with heightened color. "I am positively afraid of you."

"Well," rather sullenly, "you know Mr. Mallory has never cared a straw about me."

"Well, he doesn't care a straw about me, either, only as a good friend."

"I don't believe that."

"Just as you like. I don't require you to believe it. But it is true, nevertheless."

"What I want to know," said Corinne, having undone all the false stitches, "is this; are you going to marry Mr. Irwin?"

"No," said Portia. And then as both sisters set up a loud protest she went on to explain: "I like Mr. Irwin, and I think he is fascinating, but I don't want to marry any one. I wish I could make some money myself — a great deal all at once; people do sometimes, you know — and have papa and mamma come and live with me. You and Blanche would be married then, of course."

"Women never make any money worth mentioning," said Corinne contemptuously. "If they make any at all, they have to work harder and take less pay than any one else."

And then Corinne went on to describe to Portia the sort of life she would lead as Prince Irwin's wife: a life full of movement, full of amusement, of triumph and gayety. And her voice thrilled with feeling as she spoke.

Portia remained untouched.

"I do not feel the need of anything like that," she said gravely. "It is not the sort of life I have always hoped for."

"You don't know anything about it, that is the reason," exclaimed Corinne impatiently. "Have you no ambition to be somebody in the world? And then, the people you would meet — the great statesmen and authors and men of intellectual rank! You could see and speak with all the great people whom we can only read about. You could go to lectures, and get their best thoughts. And the opera — what music you would hear! and the picture galleries with their miles and miles of celebrated paintings; and you could know the artists, too, and visit their delightful studios — 'fourteen flats above the heads of common men,' as Mr. Mallory says."

"Oh! it would be nice, it would be delightful, of course," said Portia, moving restlessly; "but after awhile it would all seem to grow old and fade, and I should want to get back to work and silence and solitude again."

"Well," said Corinne, laughing, "is it impossible to procure silence and solitude in Boston?"

"I would have no right to either," murmured Portia, breathing quickly. "My time would not be my own. I should have to live his life."

"You would be as free as you are now — freer; for you are now hampered by the want of means."

"If mere physical comfort is the best thing in life, then the wisest thing a girl can do is to marry a rich man; but that isn't my idea of life."

"Why, Portia," put in Blanche, "I thought it was all settled when you accepted those ear-rings. I shouldn't have thought of taking mine if I hadn't considered Mr. Irwin as one of the family; should you, Corinne? Don't you know, didn't you feel that the acceptance of jewelry, or any other valuable present, is a sort of mortgage or promissory note in the obligation it places you under?"

"Mamma said it was no more than a present of books or costly flowers, such as all young ladies are in the habit of accepting from their friends," pleaded Portia. "She said it was all right."

"It is nothing to me, of course," said Corinne; "I am only amazed at your lack of appreciation of your good fortune. Think how proud he would be of you! for you are really pretty now, Portia, though it is a prettiness that would appeal more to an intellectual taste than to anything you are apt to find here. And it would be one weight off papa's shoulders."

"And papa is getting old," said Blanche. "His hair is getting gray so fast! Have you noticed lately how he stoops?"

But the discussion was suddenly cut short, and the two sisters were much startled to see Portia spring up with a low sob, cover her face with her handkerchief, and rush from the room.

Portia sat by the window of her own room, wiping her eyes now and then in a fierce and final way, with a very wet handkerchief, when there was a light tap at the door and her mother entered.

"You must not mind what Corinne and Blanche say, Portia," she began, sitting down by her daughter. "They are thoughtless, and say whatever happens to come into their minds, without reflecting whether it is right or wrong."

"I don't mind," said Portia, making a desperate effort to regain her self-control.

"And you must not think, Portia," taking her hand and smoothing it gently, "that your father or I want to get rid of any of our children. We want them to stay with us as long as they will."

Portia threw her arms around her mother's neck and burst into tears.

"Of course," continued Mrs. Ingram, smoothing back her daughter's hair caressingly, "it would be a great satisfaction to see them all settled in comfortable homes, with good, safe husbands who would never let them want for anything. Women who are thrown upon their own resources are troubled and harassed and frequently come to want, and of course we feel anxious about your future. I know you have an idea of being independent and making your own way in the world, but, oh! my child, you don't know how hard that is; I shudder to think of such a fate for you. The shelter of home is safest, Portia, and happiest

and fullest of opportunities for kind and unselfish deeds. But" — heaving a sigh of plaintive resignation — "you must not be governed by our feelings. Question your own heart, and do what it tells you. We would be very glad and happy if you could love Mr. Irwin as he loves you; but if you cannot, then we will make the best of it, and love you just the same."

Portia ceased to sob and sat erect, drying her eyes determinedly. But she made no answer.

Hitherto Mrs. Ingram had been absorbed in her older daughters almost to the exclusion of this younger one whose studious turn had made her rather solitary, and whose love for her father seemed to satisfy her heart. She now regarded the girl, in her suddenly calm, almost severe aspect, with a helpless feeling of distance and hopeless incomprehension.

Finally she said, going to the opposite window and looking out: "Well, Portia, do as you like, and don't let the girls' nonsense have any influence with you. You are stronger and wiser than either of them, I know that, and you know better than they what is best for yourself; but, my dear child, don't give up a precious thing hastily, nor without some real, important reason; for you'll find the lucky streaks of life few and far between."

Then she went out.

For a long while Portia sat at the window looking out. She tried to fancy herself Prince Irwin's

wife, at the head of his table at dinner parties and æsthetic teas, in his beautiful library; there her fancy kindled. The books, the lectures, the operas and plays — the better side of life she should see. Why should not she be grateful and glad over this rare opportunity that had come to her?

Her countenance softened and brightened as she sat looking out upon the feathery exuberance of light green foliage. The storm was over; it mattered little how; and she was conscious only of remote and dreamy anticipation.

When Mr. Irwin called the following afternoon, he found only Corinne and Blanche, with Mr. Mallory, on the veranda. They talked of indifferent things, Mallory teasing the parrot with a piece of apple, alternately offering it and snatching it away whenever Sylvester made a grab at it. Suddenly he sprang back.

"Great Cæsar! You vindictive vampire!"

"Oh! he bit your finger, did he?" laughed Corinne gleefully. "I am glad of it. Hereafter you will have a little more respect for Sylvester's feelings, perhaps."

Irwin took advantage of the flutter caused by the incident to inquire for Portia.

"She is down on the lawn," said Blanche. "I think she went to the rose-arbor."

Corinne was tying up Mallory's finger when Irwin started off in the direction of the arbor, at

his usual languid, strolling pace. Mallory turned deliberately and, assuming an attitude of profound attention, gazed after him.

"It is only an impression, of course," he said, in a gravely meditative tone, "and sometimes I even think I am mistaken; but now and then I catch a glimpse of a fiery, ungovernable creature lying hidden beneath that satin outside."

Corinne glanced surreptitiously at Blanche and smiled meaningly. Blanche nodded slightly and smiled back. "He is jealous!" these enigmatic glances declared.

"You don't like Mr. Irwin!" exclaimed Corinne in pretended amazement.

"Yes, I like him, but I mistrust him. His real nature is so entirely concealed beneath that perfectly courteous and kindly manner, that one can never determine with certainty his actual thought and motive. Yes, his coat may be smooth and sleek, his paws like velvet to the touch, but his nature has a touch of cruelty. It is all the work of that detestable" — His voice fell; he suddenly paused and began slowly to pull at the end of his moustache.

"Oh! how mistaken you are," exclaimed Corinne. "Mr. Irwin is as kind and thoughtful for others as he can be."

"Yes; I have noticed that."

"I am sure," said Blanche, "he would never cause any one unnecessary pain."

"Not if they administered to his own comfort or pleasure; not if they were utterly indifferent to him, even. But if one stood in his way!"

Mr. Irwin strolled languidly, but with secret impatience, toward the rose-arbor. He was eager to be with Portia again; to look upon the fair fresh face with its unexpected changes; to watch the calm but alert movements — never abrupt or nervously awkward. He thirsted for the half-perplexed, half-fascinated gaze which she would turn upon him. She was always new to him, and strange and stimulating.

Portia looked up from her book, and the ready rose-tide fluttered up into her cheeks. But she merely smiled and moved her dress that he might sit down beside her.

"I cannot wait," he said, taking her hand and leaning forward to look into her face. "What are you going to say to me? Please let it be something very nice!"

"I don't know," murmured Portia, motionless, but with earnest, dilated eyes. Then, as if forcing herself to go on: "If I only knew how it would all turn out! All seems fair enough now, but how will it be after a while?"

"It will be delightful after a while," he exclaimed in a tone of subdued entreaty, "for then there will be no uncertainty. You will be mine, and I will be yours. How would you like that?

I hope you are not going to be a very great tyrant. All the tyrants of any note have been little people."

Portia laughed faintly, but finished up with a troublous sigh. It was hard to forsake the old ideals.

"Well," he said, watching her intently, "what is it now?"

"I don't know," said Portia, with a woful smile.

"Never mind, then, Portia," he returned soothingly; "you needn't try to know. If you could only see how beautifully the emeralds glisten on that rose-leaf ear, you would not feel so gloomy. You do not realize the benign effect of beauty. With you I never have an angry or unkind thought."

She glanced up at him with one of her ready childish laughs. "Does that repay you for the gift? I haven't even thanked you yet."

"No, you haven't," looking down with his fervid smile into the uplifted face so near and so alluring in its tremulous radiance. "Nor have I thanked you. Shall I show you how you are always to thank me?"

And the next instant Portia felt that the world was coming to an end, for Irwin's arm was around her, his lips dropping a soft patter of kisses on hers.

"O, no!" she exclaimed excitedly.

And then with a low laugh, he desisted.

"You are mine, now, you know," he said, smiling down upon her triumphantly. "My own — my very own — my darling!"

And within her heart Portia felt that it was all over. There was nothing left her now but just to adjust her life to that of the man beside her.

The party on the veranda watched them with secret curiosity as they returned to the house. There was nothing in the manner or bearing of either to indicate any unusual understanding. As they drew near Portia was heard to say: "I wanted to be a novelist too, once, but Mr. Allerton wouldn't let me. He was so severe, I hadn't the pluck to keep on."

"I am very glad you hadn't," said Irwin fervently. "I couldn't bear to have you pouring forth your inmost soul to a beastly public."

The sisters exchanged significant glances. So it was all settled.

Portia's unconscious air wavered as she came up the steps and faced the battery of glances levelled on her. To cover her sudden confusion, she caught up the little gray kitten, tumbling aimlessly about the veranda floor, and holding the velvety creature to her face, kissed it two or three times with great apparent earnestness.

"I thought you did not approve of kissing," remarked Mr. Irwin in an ironical tone.

Portia said nothing, but stroked her kitten softly.

"At least, you should be able to appreciate other people's temptations," he added.

Portia glanced at him quickly. "Oh! that is different," she said, regarding the kitten with a smiling, bashful air.

"How different?" he asked, smiling but with a strange gleam of yellow light in his dark glowing eyes which she did not altogether comprehend.

"I don't know. Isn't it different? Don't you think it is?" smoothing the kitten restlessly.

Mr. Irwin stroked his moustache and said nothing until Portia kissed her pet again, in an absent sort of way, when he exclaimed "Don't!" with such vehemence that she dropped it in vague alarm.

"It is harmless," she next remarked, with an embarrassed laugh. "It won't eat me."

Corinne and Blanche looked on with a sort of fascinated stare. Suddenly they realized that they had not found Irwin quite as pliant and adaptable as the smoothness of his manner seemed to promise.

Mallory was studying the engravings in the Harper's Weekly Irwin had brought over with him, and did not seem to be aware of anything going on around him.

Portia had her perverse moods. She was meek only in spots. Without glancing at Irwin again, she lifted the kitten and kissed it on the tip of its nose. She did not want to kiss it, but she did it.

Mr. Irwin rose and gently disengaged the kitten from her hands. He held it lightly, but his eyes flashed. "I can't help it," he said, laughing softly, "but I hate cats!" And he dropped the helpless little animal over the balustrade.

Portia made a rush for the steps, but Irwin was too quick for her. "One or the other must surrender," he said, holding her firmly by the hands.

"I give in," exclaimed Portia, instantly.

"Very well; you may consider yourself released on parole of honor," he returned with emphasis. "You are not to kiss that cat again — never!"

"We will see about that," retorted Portia saucily.

But each of her sisters, then and there, ceased to envy Portia her good luck. After all, what did they know of this man they had been urging on their sister?

"The tyrant!" was Mallory's disgusted mental comment.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MRS. DARE.

THERE was one duty which Allerton tried in vain to elude. He deferred his departure from day to day, trying vainly to reason himself out of it. But all his sophistries failed to make any impression on that rigorous, inflexible Puritan conscience.

"Have you told the Ingrams about that woman who followed you to Venice and back?" he inquired of Irwin one day. It was a sickening mess, but there was no getting around it.

"My dear fellow," said Irwin quite readily, "there were a thousand women at my heels as I went out and as I came back. How am I to tell which one you mean?"

"I mean that — that Mrs. Dare."

"What possible interest could they have in such a person — of whom they had never heard?" He spoke with easy negligence, but the yellow light in his eyes quickened into an ominous flare.

"I know no more than the world knows, and

have no desire to inquire into the affair, but I advise you to tell Mr. Ingram all there is to tell."

"Good heavens, Allerton, what consciences you religious fellows have! Suppose there is no life hereafter? You will have spoiled this for yourself and your friends, all to no purpose."

"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that the life to come is to this life as the tree in glorious blossom to the little black seed from which it sprung. This is our battle-ground; we have a kingdom to win. Shall we allow the question of present gratification — always a fleeting, evanescent thing — to stand in our way?"

They wandered off into purely theological discussions, but each knew the other's purpose. It was Irwin's intention to ignore the past, and Allerton felt that he must speak out, clearly and definitely, against his friend.

His vague warnings had passed by unheeded. And why? Because of their vagueness.

A true Soldier of the Cross must learn to stand up and, not only take hard blows, but give them, even to your friend of friends, if need be.

Allerton's face began to wear a discouraged look. Others beside Irwin began to notice marks of depression about his eyes and mouth, but only Irwin had any clew to the cause, and he only a distorted one.

It was not merely a selfish sorrow for lost happiness. He feared for Portia's future. As a faithful

wife she would endeavor to be one with her husband; and with Irwin, her feet would be led into purely worldly paths. For Irwin there was almost no hope of change; like Ephraim, he had settled on his lees.

Portia's unquestioning confidence, Irwin's radiant content, and the apparent satisfaction of the whole household seemed to laugh him and his forebodings to scorn. He would gladly have relinquished the lessons, but no one else suggested it, and pride — as inexorable as fate — forced him along the accustomed way, though for the most part he groped in darkness, his lights all gone out.

Three weeks of conflict and misery, and he awoke one night from a vivid dream in which Portia stood wringing her hands with a look of such anguish as he had not conceived possible to so calm a nature. He shuddered in the darkness over the tragic suggestiveness of this vision. It seemed almost a prophecy.

He went over the following morning and asked to see Mr. Ingram. Mrs. Ingram presented herself in his stead. She said her husband was very busy in the field, but if she would not do she would have him called. She thanked him for a new cookery book he had sent her, and herself broached the subject he had in mind.

This was a great relief, as he could reply to all her questions as to Irwin's family, his circumstances and social standing, with entire freedom.

Mrs. Ingram was very gracious and kindly in her manner, evidently much pleased with his account of her prospective son-in-law's worldly prospects.

"It is too bad the youngest will be married first," she said. "But I am glad Portia has made such a wise choice. Such a kind and amiable gentleman, so cultivated and refined!"

Allerton sat staring at the opposite wall, endeavoring to fortify himself against the hostility he would have to encounter in speaking against her favorite. Irwin had doubtless prepared the way, and they would all consider him a jealous traitor to his friend.

When Mrs. Ingram had concluded her panegyric he told his story as briefly, as delicately and as clearly as he could, and as she listened Mrs. Ingram thanked her stars that it had come to her ears instead of her husband's, who was so foolish about Portia that he would, as likely as not, have ended the engagement then and there. No human being, in his estimation, was good enough for Portia. She would tell him, of course, but she would soften and extenuate Allerton's bald narrative, and with a few pathetic touches, lend it an air of almost tragic interest. Mrs. Ingram was no politician, but she knew how to whitewash her candidate.

When she had given Mr. Ingram her version of the story, she added, "Mr. Allerton has lived alone, and read his Bible and prayed over the universe until he thinks nobody in it good except himself.

"Allerton is no egotist," returned her husband. "He is an earnest, humble Christian, deeply concerned for the universal prevalence of good. He has strong faith in his own ideas of right, and but scant patience with other people's wrong. His creed is rather narrow and severe."

Mrs. Ingram had not meant to be dishonest. She really believed Allerton's hair-splitting conscience involuntarily exaggerated trifles and made matter for bewailment of unimportant flaws. And as Irwin, in anticipation of his friend's intention, had wisely made open confession, first to Mrs. Ingram, and then, by her advice, in reduced proportions to her husband, his engaging candor and evident deep regret put to rout all thought of any serious investigation as a needless reflection on him.

And again Allerton's warning passed unheeded.

Nothing was said of the matter to Portia, of course, and so she continued to come to her lessons each morning radiant with the pleasure of her daily gallop through the woods with Irwin.

But one morning Allerton was unavoidably delayed until long after the lesson hour. As he was hurrying up the avenue, he caught a glimpse of a lady's dress through the tangle of vines that curtained off a little nook on the outskirts of the lawn. It was probably Portia, and to save time he bent his steps in that direction. But in front of the leafy retreat he involuntarily paused.

It was useless to pretend unconsciousness of the drooping figure within, else he would gladly have done so. Already she had started erect, and sat glaring at him with a haughty defiance which demanded explanation and apology for an unwarranted intrusion.

He had never seen Portia in tears before. "I thought you would not wish to miss your lessons, and I couldn't come any sooner," he said, with unwonted timidity and self-distrust. "Won't you tell me what is the matter? Couldn't I help you in some way?"

"No, thank you," Portia replied, with severe dignity. "There is nothing the matter, and I don't need any help."

"But there must be," he urged, touched by the evidences of real pain beneath an assumption of rigorous self-possession, "though it may be only a shadow; often our keenest griefs are only imaginary. Yet it may be real; you must know how gladly I would do you a service, if I might."

Portia heaved a sigh. Her thoughts took a sudden swirl over her griefs, and their probable insignificance in Allerton's estimation, and then she formally declined his offer of services.

With an apology for his intrusion, Allerton was making a hasty exit, when a voice, full of suppressed laughter, inquired, "What's your hurry, Mr. Allerton?"

"Verily," he thought, as he contemplated this

sudden transition in silent wonder, "the sorrows of youth are transient."

"You looked so lugubrious," she laughed. "I really couldn't help it. The truth is, I am not capable of deep feeling. I have laughed at a funeral, though, indeed, I managed to look as if I were crying. Wasn't that dreadful? Irreverence and hypocrisy. But I positively couldn't help it."

"If you can dissipate your griefs so easily, do it, by all means," looking at her with unsmiling eyes.

She met the look an instant, then went on talking: "You know how long we have had Jack; what a good dog he is, and how much we all love him?"

"Yes," assented Allerton, in some wonder.

"Well, mamma says he must be killed, because he eats so much. We can't afford to keep him."

"Was that the trouble?" he exclaimed incredulously.

"Do you mean to insinuate that Jack isn't worth a tear?" indignantly. "You didn't know that Blanche and I sat up all night with Jack once when he was sick, bandaging him with hot water, and giving him whiskey toddy?"

"Jack is a nice dog, certainly," he said, rather absently, detecting in the suspicious tremulousness about her mouth a tension of the nerves that might culminate in laughter or in tears.

"I see you don't believe me," and she laughed helplessly.

Allerton turned away sadly. "Nothing, not even congenial sympathy — not even love — can always shield us from pain."

"Sometimes," she returned very gravely, "I think there is no such thing as true sympathy or congeniality — only that which we imagine or create."

A singular remark, he thought, from a happy *fiancé*. "How can you say that? In all your happy companionship with your father — the close confidence and sympathy I always imagined as existing between you two — have you failed to find out the true meaning of congeniality?"

Portia looked startled. For a moment she was silent, then she heaved a deep sigh. "O, yes! our kindred, that is a natural inheritance — our precious birthright. And," with one of her sudden bursts of laughter, "some of us sell it for a mess of pottage."

"I should like to ask a favor of you," he said, after a few moments of silence; "lend me that story of yours again."

"Suppose it is burned?"

"But it is not."

"No," she admitted, "it is not. But there is too much superfluous nonsense in it. I could not let you have it."

"There is some," he assented, with needless candor, and he failed to get it for further scrutiny and censure.

Mr. Irwin lost no time in informing his relatives of his good fortune. There was no one to interfere: his two half-brothers were married, and had set up households of their own; his only sister, Mrs. Richard Horton, was two years his senior: she had no children. She was proud of "Lindley," as he was called in the bosom of his family, and took deep interest in all his movements. She had great confidence in his taste and judgment; but she found it difficult to feel any confidence in this ideal young woman, born and bred in an out-of-the-way Kentucky village.

Kentucky, where they did nothing but raise horses, and bet on them, make whiskey and drink it, and carry pistols and shoot each other!

After mature deliberation and due conference with "Richard," Mrs. Horton decided to go down and see for herself. Men sometimes made such fearful mistakes in affairs of this kind!

The Ingrams were somewhat startled when they were informed that Mrs. Richard Horton of Boston was stopping at the little snuffy village tavern, and expected to be called on by the entire feminine force immediately, as she was merely passing through Athens on her way to Boston.

It was a great event, for, in spite of the fleers and jeers of the South, the West, and the middlemen, each and all have an abiding faith in the superior culture of Boston.

What should they wear?

Men might be imposed upon with old-time organdies done over and over, and mended and pieced and trimmed up with lace, but a lady would know better — and a genuine society lady! "an army with banners" would be less formidable.

"The mere cut of the dress is of no consequence," said Mrs. Ingram; "we're not expected to be fashionable; but it must be in exquisite taste."

Corinne, indeed, had never looked more beautiful than she did that day in her pale amber "Shakespeare dress," with bands of black velvet on the slashed sleeves and square-cut bodice. Even the broad hat with its irregular brim, and long amber-colored silk gloves, did not spoil the effect.

Portia, in pale-green organdie with a bit of her mother's rare old lace at the neck and sleeves, and and a simple straw hat, had a charming woodland air. And even Mrs. Ingram in her best black silk and lace bonnet, manufactured by Corinne's deft fingers, looked like one of Du Maurier's graceful realistic figures. Blanche, in her ordinary walking dress, was more modish and conventional than any of the party.

They were received very graciously by Mrs. Horton, who gave no sign of her secret wonder at the simple effectiveness of their apparel. "Where did they learn the preciousness of simplicity?" she afterward asked of her brother. "Corinne might have stepped from a London drawing-room, and

Portia looked like a sea-nymph. Did you give them any hints about their dress, Lindley?"

"Certainly not. You couldn't teach those girls anything about dress. They are instinctive artists. And Mrs. Ingram was a great belle in her day. She was partly educated abroad. She belongs to one of the fine old families in which the women were all beautiful and the men all brave."

"Yes; she let me know that she had seen something of the world in her day. Corinne is more like her than Portia."

Mrs. Horton remained in Athens a week. She was pleased with everything, even the new rag carpet on her great barren bedroom at the old barn of a hotel. "I have seen carpets just like it in the White Mountains, and up on the Hudson, and at Lake George," she informed her astonished landlady. "It is surprising how much alike things are all over the world."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the landlady, in admiring wonder.

So well satisfied was Mrs. Horton with her airy quarters and the flattering homage of her landlady that she persistently declined Allerton's repeated invitations to make her headquarters at The Oaks while she remained. She could study the people better where she was, and she had always wanted to know the South.

She wrote out her impressions, generalizing and classifying the entire people from her week's expe-

rience, for the benefit of the Transcript's subscription list. On the morning preceding her departure, Mr. Irwin took Portia over in his two-horse phaeton for a farewell visit.

As they approached the hotel a carriage dashed past them and drew up in front of the common entrance. The door opened, and a lady descended, followed by her maid.

She was richly dressed in black, with one deep red rose in her stylish hat. For a moment she stood on the pavement shaking out the folds of her dress. She glanced at Irwin, hesitated an instant, then came quickly forward, her face irradiated with smiles.

"Ah, it is you! I thought I could not be mistaken. How odd that I should meet you here!"

Her manner was easy, perhaps even a little ironical as she went on, looking up into his inscrutable countenance.

"Really, I suppose I oughtn't to speak to you, for you've treated me shamefully. But I am not as proud as I used to be, and it was such a surprise, meeting you here. Where have you been keeping yourself all this time? Not in this little fag-end of the world?"

Mr. Irwin accepted her outstretched hand and her voluble greeting with formal courtesy, ironically inquiring into the nature of the accident that had favored this fag-end of the world with the honor of her presence. But he did not present his

companion who stood quietly beside him, looking young and fair and entirely undisturbed.

Irwin left Portia with his sister, asking to be excused for a few minutes.

"But where are you going?" inquired Mrs. Horton, with a playful air. "You see, Portia, that will be his married way. You will see less and less of him until you will scarcely recognize him on the street. I see Richard by daylight only on Sundays."

"Sister, sister!" He held up a finger, shook it menacingly in simulation of the married tyrant, and closed the door between them.

Portia sat there, quietly blushing and smiling.

"I foresee you will be a submissive subject," said Mrs. Horton, returning her smile. "My dear, men are singular creatures. They must always be first. They invariably decline to play the accompaniment to a woman's talk, no matter how fine it may be. There was nothing on earth to call Lindley away. He is this minute gazing vacantly up and down the street; just like Richard, for all the world! Many a time I might have made myself the life of a party, but refrained because of his dislike to personal display in women. Oh! they are a masterly set, I assure you, my dear. But some day we are going to throw off the yoke of this despotism. You will hear all about it when you come up to Boston."

"Mr. Irwin met a friend outside," Portia said at

the first pause; "a lady who seemed to be an old friend. I think he has gone to speak with her."

"An old friend?" Mrs. Horton looked perplexed.

"She seemed very much surprised and pleased to see him, at least."

"Strange! What style of person did she seem to be?"

"I thought her rather unusual. Not exactly pretty, but striking. She was pale, and had reddish hair."

Mrs. Horton examined the Japanese landscape on her fan rather seriously. "Some acquaintance Lindley has picked up in his travels, perhaps. She had only just arrived?"

"Yes. But she is no ordinary or recent acquaintance, I am sure," said Portia, with a searching glance at Lindley's sister. "She almost seemed to think he had been hiding from her." And Portia laughed merrily at remembrance of the encounter.

Mrs. Horton found herself meeting the clear, candid gaze of her visitor ere she was aware. She rearranged the folds of her beautiful India silk morning dress, and glanced away with her fine irrelevant smile.

"It is Mrs. Dare, I fancy. No one else of our acquaintance goes roving over the country in that desultory fashion. Lindley has had so many pleasant things to talk with you about that he has proba-

bly never told you about his unfortunate experience with this Mrs. Dare, though he should have done so. He naturally shrank from confessing to you that he once made a fool of himself."

"But he did tell me," said Portia; "that is, he told me he had once fancied himself deeply in love with some woman whom he ought not to have loved. I did not ask her name."

Mrs. Horton smiled indulgently. "Lindley feared to shake your faith in his constancy. But I know, Portia, you will not be surprised to hear that a man of thirty-five has had more than one love affair. You would even find it difficult to believe a declaration to the contrary. This Mrs. Dare seems perfectly and permanently infatuated with Lindley, though he has long since ceased to regard her as anything except a — an annoyance. It is a source of great mortification to Lindley, for the woman has a husband now, unless they have been recently divorced; and of course her foolish fancy is anything but agreeable. If she has followed him down here, I am very sorry for Lindley. I sometimes think that — that her mind is unsettled."

When Mr. Irwin joined them he looked a little harassed in spite of his efforts to appear as if nothing had happened. In answer to his sister's glance, he murmured in Italian as he handed her the painted fan which had dropped to the floor, "It's that confounded woman!"

On their way home Irwin said, "I have a humiliating confession to make, Portia; I should have told you long ago."

"Perhaps I have heard it already," said Portia, as he hesitated.

He looked at her with searching inquiry. "Did my sister tell you?"

"She told me about Mrs. Dare."

"Ah!" He fell into a reverie. How much had she told? he wondered. Then, with a sigh of relief, he saw that he must defer his confession until he had heard his sister's version. "Mrs. Dare is anxious to meet you," he said after awhile. "Would you object to calling on her with your sisters one day this week? She usually drives from eleven until one. You might leave your cards while she is out."

"But I should like to find her at home."

"You wouldn't like her," he declared. "You don't know," and his voice vibrated with passionate feeling, "how your simple innocence and truth have penetrated to the very depths of my soul, and utterly destroyed all taste, even toleration, for any but pure and noble women. You can't imagine the shudder of self-disgust I experienced when I saw that woman, and remembered that I actually thought of marrying her once!"

He took Portia's hand in his own and clasped it closely, as if he feared she might be slipping away beyond his reach.

Portia looked grave.

"Would to Heaven I had never seen her!" he exclaimed with a deep breath. Then he leaned forward and looked into Portia's serious eyes. "My love, my love! if you should die now, or in any way go out of my life, I don't know how I should manage to live on without you. It seems strange now how I could ever have endured the sight of ony other woman, for I have always felt vaguely that you were somewhere in the world, though I had almost lost the hope of ever finding you. And now if I should lose you, after all!"

Portia was thrilled and shaken as she remarked the pallor of the strong face, the tremulousness of the great frame, and for a moment turned away in instinctive alarm. Her heart began to throb with the strong conviction that this man, who had somehow taken possession of her, was a man of power, and conscious of that power. Then, ashamed of her sudden cowardice, she turned again and met his gaze.

"But he is good," she assured herself, seeing naught beneath the appealing tenderness of the dark gleaming eyes, "and there is nothing to fear. It must be true, as Corinne says, that the attraction between strong men and weak women is natural and invincible. It cannot be helped, and perhaps ought not to be."

That made everything easy and comfortable; it was natural and right.

Then she smiled kindly into the troubled eyes, and tried with her fingers to smooth away the two perpendicular wrinkles from between his brows. And she soothed and laughed at him, but declined to kiss him, as he suggested. Was not her word as good as her bond?

CHAPTER XXVII.

MANDA'S STORY.

BEFORE leaving Athens Mrs. Richard Horton dined at The Oaks, and also with the Ingrams. She was so good as to express herself delighted with Kentucky in every respect. She had already written to the Transcript, she told them, that the South had been greatly misrepresented. The white people were quite intelligent, and exceedingly friendly. The colored people were not only free, she found, but free and easy. There were several very respectable libraries in the vicinity, and during the entire week of her sojourn in Athens there had been but one shooting affray!

As she packed her trunk for departure, a slight shuffling noise attracted her attention just outside her door. The door was ajar, and she paused to listen.

"Go 'long, now!" said a girl's voice, in rough, urgent tones.

"Well," said another, and more childish voice, "you got to come right b'hind me."

"Go 'long, niggah, or I'll hit you!"

Then a little negro girl, of about eight years, shuffled in and backed against the door in a position convenient for sudden flight at the slightest hostile movement.

"Miz Ho'ton," she stammered, "Lindy say ain't you got no ole dress, nor nuffin, to gin heh?"

"No," said Mrs. Horton sternly, "I haven't. If Lindy wants anything, why doesn't she come and ask for it herself, instead of driving you?"

The midget vanished. "No; sh'ain't got any," she reported.

"You didn't ax heh half. Go 'long back, an ax heh ag'in, or I'll skin you alive; dah now!"

When Mrs. Horton saw the little imp creeping cautiously in again, to repeat her petition, starting to dart back at the slightest movement on her part, a feeling of pity touched her heart.

"Well," she said, "tell Lindy to come in, then."

A stalwart, stolid-looking mulatto girl of thirteen or thereabouts, slouched in.

"There," said Mrs. Horton, throwing her a pretty braided summer skirt and a lace-trimmed dressing-sacque, "you must not be so rough with your sister. I wouldn't give you these if she hadn't asked so nicely." And then she gladdened the heart of the little one with some bright ribbons and boxes, and a silver dollar.

So interested was she in Dixie that she thought seriously for ten or fifteen minutes, of buying her

from her mother. But the reflection that there was no time to devise suitable travelling gear for the little pickaninny decided her finally to leave the child to the tender mercies of Lindy.

Mrs. Dare seemed even more loath to leave Athens and the South, than Irwin's sister. She tarried indefinitely at the rambling old tavern, and the presence of so brilliant and accessible a society lady was not without its effect on the susceptible male inhabitants of Athens. Jack Snead professed to be quite infatuated, and, strange to say, Mrs. Dare seemed equally pleased with Jack, who was gallant, good-natured, exceptionally quick-witted, and absolutely unaware of any difference between the people who had money and those who had none.

Even Mallory was said to have found her interesting. As to her beauty, there were a variety of opinions.

"Too pale and unhealthy looking," was Mr. Crugar's verdict, delivered from the steps of the Ingram veranda, where he sat whittling a stick. Mr. Crugar was an adept in the art of making himself at home wherever he went. "One of your intellectual abstractions; all eyes and hair — and red hair, at that. Not" — suddenly recollecting Blanche — "not a pretty auburn like — like I've seen."

"You came near forgetting that I had red hair,"

said Blanche, in a voice not altogether expressive of pleasantry.

"You don't pretend to say you don't admire her hair?" exclaimed Jack. "Then why was she telling you, last evening, that hair was too high to be thrown away on a mere flirtation? And especially that peculiar shade, she said, was very costly. You are not going into the hair business, are you?"

"She couldn't have refused him," said Blanche incredulously. "She dotes on gentlemen, as she frankly confessed when she was calling here the other day. And to console herself for the unprofitable fifteen minutes she spent on us three despicable females, she seized on Mr. Irwin as soon as he arrived, and inveigled him into taking her away in his phaeton, leaving her maid to go home alone."

"It's my impression that he's afraid of her," said Hugh Middleton. "He doesn't like her, I am sure."

"O, indeed!" exclaimed Blanche. "And are you afraid of her, too? I saw you out driving with her the other day."

Portia often wondered why Blanche was so petulant with her two lovers. Rather commonplace lovers, it is true — not to be compared with hers; but genuine lovers who hated and forgave each other by turns, slandered each other and grew penitent and confessional as each felt himself in the ascendant.

Portia had slipped away into the library. She had one of her restless moods, and could settle to nothing. She had begun to be sharply conscious of the chain assumed so lightly. Sometimes she seemed to herself as one who awaits in suspense the coming of a sentence — the inexorable, relentless sentence of death.

She did not see Mr. Irwin so often now, and when she did see him his passionate expressions of tenderness gave her only an indefinable feeling of insecurity and dread. Once he had made her say again and again that she loved him; and he had kissed her hair, and eyes, and lips, and sought to extort from her a promise never, never to give him up, no matter what happened.

Her impulse was to promise anything to relieve his distress of mind, but she felt that no vow of hers would have that effect.

In their recent close association Portia had discovered that Irwin's standard of right was not so high as her own. She had discovered, too, many unsuspected faults and failings; but these very deficiencies only endeared him to her all the more. She would help him to be good — had he not said it made him better to be with her? — they would help each other; for Portia felt her shortcomings more and more. It was not mistrust, but an instinctive shrinking from useless vows, that withheld her from the promise he sought — that "nothing on earth should ever separate them."

"'Pears to me, Miss Po'tia," said Manda, who was dusting the scant library furniture, "'pears to me you's lookin' low-sperritted lately."

Portia took her chin off her hand and turned a leaf in her book. "I had just been thinking that of you, Manda," she rejoined.

In truth, she had recently observed a certain listlessness about Manda that was not natural to her, and wondered if crude natures like these have the same spiritual struggles and heart-trials as their masters and mistresses. "I have noticed for some time that you're not so brisk and lively as you used to be, Manda. Is there anything the matter?"

"No'm. Nothin' petikler's the matter. Leastways nothin' thet kin be helped."

"What has become of that Tim I used to see round here so much, Manda? You haven't sent him away, have you? I haven't seen him lately."

"Tim? Oh! he's done married to one o' Jedge Pirtle's women — Sallie Jenkins. Ben married more'n a week."

"Why, I thought you and Tim were going to be married. Weren't you making your wedding clothes?"

"I wuz — but — but Tim he tuk an' fooled me!" Here Manda broke down, and, covering her face with her apron, sobbed aloud.

"Never mind, Manda," said Portia soothingly. "If Tim's done wrong he will be punished for it,

so forgive him; such a fellow isn't worth grieving after, and I have no doubt you can do better."

"Oh! it's not that," sobbed Manda. "Ef he'd bettered hisself I wouldn't care so much. But Tim's done married an awful woman, an' all caus he wuz mad at me. But, 'fore de Lawd, Miss Po'tia, I wa'n't to blame! He's sorry enough now, when it can't be helped."

"Don't you believe anything of the kind, Manda. He has treated you shamefully, and I wouldn't listen to any excuse. Besides, he could have married you; you say yourself it wasn't your fault. Don't you ever pay any more attention to what Tim says. No doubt he's a rascal."

"I done tole him that, Miss Po'tia, right to his face. And I axed him, plain out, 'What d'you tell me that lie fur? I never axed you fur no lie!' An' Tim said I'd know sometime; he couldn't tell me now, an' he hoped I'd furgive him fur it. I says, 'No, I ain't never g'wine to furgive you!' An' then, fool like, I bust out cryin', an' Tim he bust out, too. It's all that sly, deceivin' Sallie's doin's. I know'd all along she wuz g'wine to try fur to git Tim away fum me."

"We'll, let her have him. You have got nothing more to do with him, now he is married. Don't you ever speak to him, Manda, nor take any notice of him."

"No'm."

Manda's work was thoroughly completed by this

time, but she lingered unaccountably, pretending to polish the table legs. At length she ceased and, standing up before Portia, exclaimed, with a half-bold, half-frightened air, "Miss Po'tia, ef you won't be mad at me, I'd like to tell you somethin'."

"Well, Manda," — Portia turned on her a cool, penetrating look — "I don't want to hear any gossip. If that is what it is, you needn't tell me."

"It's the sacred truth, Miss Po'tia; I seed it with my own eyes. It's about that Bawson woman."

"She isn't a Boston woman," said Portia.

"Aunt Ailsie say I'd better keep my mouth shet, but I thought it mout be my duty fo' to tell you, any how."

"Very well; what is it?"

"You know when she wuz here a-callin' on you an' Miss C'rinne an' Miss Blanche, she axed Mr. Irwin to let her go home 'long side o' him; Tillie say she heard her ax 'im. I wuz weedin' o' the lawn, an' I seed her talkin' away mighty airnes' when they pass. Then somethin' got the matter wi' one o' the horse's shoes, an' Mr. Irwin he called to the driver o' the other team to come an' fix it. I know'd the driver; it wuz Ben Taylor wot stays at the tavern. I wuz jes' a-g'wine down to see ef the weeds hadn't done a'most tuck them fuchys down tha', an' I see Miz Dare lookin' at Mr. Irwin desp'rit sorry, like as ef her heart done a'most gone down into her shoes; an' Mr. Irwin he looked

mad. An' I seed Ben Taylor's hosses gittin' scared and backin' into the fayton, an' that foreign woman o' Miz Dare's done fainted dead away, an' I run to the hosses a-hollerin' an' a-scarin' of 'em wus an' wus, Ben Taylor say, but I don't b'lieve 'im. When Ben Taylor caught 'em they'd done turned the fayton over, an' Miz Dare she wus a-cryin' an' a-holdin' Mr. Irwin roun' the neck, an' a-hollerin' she wisht the hosses hed a' killed 'em both, so they'd a-died together! 'Fo' the Lawd, Miss Po'tia, I'se a-tellin' o' the sacred truth. I dunno' what Mr. Irwin wuz a-sayin', fur he's a-speakin' low, and he seed me a-lookin', an' the foreign woman hed come to, an' wuz a-hollerin'."

"Why, Manda," said Portia calmly, "how did it happen you never mentioned this before? I never heard a word about any trouble with the horses."

"No'm; 'cause Mr. Irwin he gin me a quatah, an' say, 'Mandy, don't you go to makin' no redik'lous tale o' this.' I tuck the quatah, an' say I wouldn't neveh mention it, an' I hain't breathed it to a livin' soul 'cept you an' Aunt Ailsie. An' Ben say he gin him a quatah, an' he hain't said nothin' 'bout it. 'Cause Ben he likes Mr. Irwin, an' wouldn't do nothin' to 'splease 'im, Ben wouldn't. An' that's the sacred truth, Miss Po'tia. An' ef I wuz you, Miss Po'tia, I'd" —

"Never mind what you would do, Manda. You have told your story, and that is enough. Do not tell it to any one else."

"No'm. Miss Po'tia, way don't you dress up ra'al fine, like Miz Dare, an' wear bows on yo' hair, an' a big sash, an' a silk dress? That dress do look like somebody's ole cast-off. Ef I wuz you, I wouldn't eveh weah dat dress again."

"That will do, Manda. Go along about your work now; you've talked quite enough."

"Yes'm. Miss Po'tia, when you done wearin' o' that dress"—

"You shall have it, Manda, if you will mind what I say, and go away now. I am busy, and can't be interrupted any longer."

Manda left the room, but soon returned, with an excited air. "Here's Miz Dare now, Miss Po'tia, an' she done axed fur you petikler."

"Manda," said Portia seriously, "there was no harm on earth in what you saw. It was perfectly natural that Mrs. Dare should be excited and frightened, and say and do unnatural things; but Mr. Irwin knew how you and Ben might misunderstand and exaggerate everything, and that is why he wanted you not to speak of it. And don't you ever do it, Manda, for it might do a great deal of harm."

Mrs. Dare had called to see if Portia would go with her for a short drive. It was so tiresome driving about with no one to speak to, and Theresa had been unavoidably detained, and she was so dependent on company. It would be a real charity if she would take pity on her forlorn condition.

Portia had no objections. She got her hat, and promptly seated herself, in the limp blue gingham Manda had so disparaged, beside the glittering Mrs. Dare.

In less than half an hour the group on the veranda were surprised to see Portia returning alone and on foot.

"Where is Mrs. Dare?" inquired Corinne.

"I asked her to put me out at the gate."

"You impolite thing! Suppose Mrs. Dare had wanted to stay to tea, as I have no doubt she did? You couldn't have gone very far; you haven't been gone more than twenty minutes."

Portia made no reply, but came up the steps looking pale and inexpressibly weary. Hugh and Jack were gone, but Mallory and Crugar had arrived in the meantime.

"Did you have a nice drive?" Mallory asked, in his pleasant, musical voice. "You have walked too fast in the hot sun; you really look almost ill."

Portia looked at him dumbly, and he saw that her illness was not physical. The next instant he heard her feet flying up the stairway to her room, and the door shut with a sharp click that told him she had locked herself in.

"I wonder where Mr. Irwin can be?" said Blanche. "He seems to have constituted himself guardian over Mrs. Dare; it's a great wonder he left her to drive alone this afternoon."

"She never drove in the afternoon before," said

Mr. Crugar. "He probably thinks her asleep in her room, or out in the grove flirting with Jack Snead or Mr. Decker."

Mr. Crugar suddenly found that he must go. "Will you come now, Mallory? Well, good-by!" He bowed low to the young ladies, mounted his steed, and with another sweeping obeisance, dashed down the avenue.

Crugar's was a gossip-loving mind; having no business of his own, he had all the more time for other people's. He hoped to overtake Mrs. Dare and discover the cause of Portia's evident agitation.

"See here," exclaimed Mallory as soon as Crugar was out of hearing, "there is something wrong with that fellow Irwin: Crugar knows it. Ask Jack Snead; ask his saintly friend Allerton. Mrs. Ingram, you are not going to let Portia marry that man?"

"What do you know about Mr. Irwin?" said Mrs. Ingram, an indignant light dawning in her eyes. "I certainly would not allow my daughter to associate with a man who was unworthy in any respect; but any one is liable to be slandered by envious people."

Mallory's eyes flashed angrily, but his look was none the less determined. "I know a good deal about Mr. Irwin; more than I should like to tell you. Mrs. Dare could enlighten you, and doubtless would take a pleasure in doing so. I have no

right to speak, of course, except the right which any human being has to warn another who is in danger. And I shall certainly do all I can to dissuade Portia from such a marriage."

"Oh! doubtless," sneered Mrs. Ingram, now thoroughly angry. "This is quite new, isn't it — this spirit of general disinterested benevolence you claim? Quite in the Allerton vein. Since how long have you had it?"

But Mallory was making his adieu, and did not appear to hear her.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE DUEL.

MALLORY, with his straw hat pulled over his fiery eyes, dashed furiously down the dusty road. Mrs. Ingram's sarcastic words had thoroughly roused the simmering animosity which had long rankled in his mind against these two "conceited, obtrusive, self-important Yankees," especially Allerton. "That blamed scoundrel is at the bottom of it!" he exclaimed. "Thought I wanted to marry Portia, and as he couldn't induce her to marry him, he has brought on this *dilettante* — this deep, conscienceless trifler, with the fixed design to defeat me. And I kept still, and let them walk over me! I had a notion once — I wish now I had married her myself."

Mallory actually believed, as Allerton before him had believed, that he could easily have married Portia if he had only asked her at the right time.

He longed to meet Allerton in the lane or in the silent woods, with no one near to interfere. In this hope he went considerably out of his way,

following a little streamlet leading into Allerton's own territory. As last, when he was about to give up the search, he came suddenly on him, seated on a mossy bank, neath his own vine, calmly reading his papers.

Mallory was not easily angered, but once thoroughly roused he was for immediate battle. He despised quarrelling; it was despicably mean and petty. "Rather break an enemy's bones, or pound his flesh to jelly, than stab him to the heart with words, or rend his character to fragments." Broken bones and bruised flesh were light afflictions compared with a sore heart and a blackened reputation.

He dismounted, and crossed the space between them with quick, determined steps. "Scoundrel!" he exclaimed, his eyes flashing, his whole body tingling, "cur!"

"Your calling me a scoundrel does not make me one," coolly returned Allerton, without change of position.

"No; it is your own actions that make you one. Can you fight, or shall I have to knock you down?"

"Do you think I am going to engage in a fist fight, like a common rough, merely to gratify you?" said Allerton, regarding him with cold scorn.

"Oh! you prefer pistols, perhaps?"

"I don't propose a fight at all."

"I expected as much," sneered Mallory. "You

a soldier! you a patriot! You haven't a drop of true valor in you veins. You haven't the honor nor the courage to defend your character when its duplicity is exposed. Coward!"

"I am not so much of a coward as to be afraid of being called one," returned Allerton calmly. "My life is not my own, much less is another's mine. He who thinks differently, I can despise as heartily as he despises me."

"I hadn't the least expectation of your being able to understand the code of honor extant among well-bred gentlemen," said Mallory.

"Honor! what sort of honor is that which is ready to commit murder, or to fling away this life, given us for noble deeds, merely to gratify a false pride? Fear of the epithet of 'coward' from the lips of fools may induce fools to pollute their hands in human blood — to break human hearts, and the laws of God and man — but not sensible people. Of whose making is the code of honor you mention? I acknowledge no laws except those of my conscience and my country. Nor do I consider my character in the least endangered from the attacks of people blinded by prejudice."

"Very well, then," said Mallory, turning away, "since you are so indifferent, I shall have no hesitancy in making your real character known where it will have some effect. You shall not succeed in your villainous schemes against an innocent girl — I swear that!"

"What are you talking about?" exclaimed Allerton, rising to his feet. "What is the matter with you; are you drunk?"

Mallory whirled round, facing him. "You unprincipled scoundrel!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "If there's a drop of manly blood in your body, stand up and take the thrashing you deserve. Lash with your tongue, if you prefer the weapon; I prefer another sort," and with rapid movements he lifted his riding-whip and gave Allerton a stinging cut across the face.

Before the whip had time to descend a second time, it was wrenched from his grasp and broken into fragments.

"If I should kill this ferocious brute, no jury would condemn me," was the tempting thought that flashed through Allerton's brain. "No, perhaps not," spoke the monitor within, "but God and your conscience would condemn you."

"It is not self-control," was Mallory's contemptuous thought, when there was no sign of retaliation. "There is nothing there to control. The dense, white-livered craven!" With that he planted a blow in the centre of Allerton's forehead, which sent him staggering back against the tree behind him.

The two men now seemed to have exchanged natures. Mallory was cool apparently and entirely self-possessed. It was the very test of strength he had longed for. But Allerton, stung with rage,

sprang upon him with a savage force that hurled him to the earth.

For a long time he handled his antagonist with a fury that made up for his lack of skill he had longed for. But Mallory's superior activity, and his experience as a trained fencer, soon recovered him the advantage.

Neither of the two men was now a responsible being. If it had chanced to be in the power of either to destroy the other, murder would certainly have been committed. So fiendish is human rage!

At last Mallory overpowered his enemy. He lifted him up and shook him until the small remaining strength was extinguished; then dropped the limp body to the ground.

Not until Allerton lay white and still at his feet, did the cruel look die out of his countenance. He was merely giving way to a brutish instinct — gratifying an impulse of rage that had long been gathering within him.

As he stood looking down on the inanimate figure, a thrill of remorse pierced his heart.

"Allerton!" he called.

There was no answer.

No thunder so potent as the terrible dumbness of death. He raised Allerton's head and called his name in piteous accents. Then he dipped his hat into the dancing stream at the foot of the bank and dashed the water into the deathlike face. His heart beat heavily under such a load as it had

never borne before. Was he a murderer, with the curse of Cain on his soul?

He dashed the water over Allerton's face. He called his name again and again. At last Allerton opened wide his eyes, stared for an instant at Mallory bending over him, then repulsed him feebly with his hand.

"Let me help you to the house," entreated Mallory. His anger sated, he was again the patient, kindly gentleman. "I'm real sorry this thing happened, Allerton" —

"Your repentance comes rather late," returned the other hoarsely, the blood rushing over his face in a dark purple wave. "Leave me alone, please."

He would not allow Mallory to touch him, but, gathering a stick from the ground, with great difficulty he rose to his feet, and slowly, totteringly, made his way toward the house.

Once or twice he had to stop and lean against a tree to rest. At last, an old negro working in the field, saw him and came running to his assistance, and Mallory who had stood looking gloomily after him, turned away with a sigh of profound relief and thankfulness. "Sometimes I hate that man," he muttered, "and sometimes — I hate myself."

He remounted his horse and rode slowly homeward. How near he had come to being that most wretched of creatures, a murderer! What powerful forces for evil there must be within his soul!

He looked sadly about him upon the lengthening shadows. How hard it was to keep in the right path — to live up to one's highest standard.

A feeling of despair came over him. "What will be the end of this wretched soul, this deceitful heart now running wild with passion, now sunk fathoms deep in moral sloth and degradation? There is no hope except that the God who made us pities us and freely offers us help. Who knows but the second death is merely the extinction of the spiritual nature begun in this life?"

He turned his horse toward a deep woods on his own estate, which he had always loved, and, riding slowly, fell into still deeper self-communion. How was it possible he had so long remained blind to the beauty, the real greatness of the work this alien was trying to do for a thankless people who even resented his efforts to show them the greatness of the souls they crowded and crushed with heaps of worthless rubbish: this true nobleman who lived up to the divine light within — whom he had trodden underfoot as ruthlessly as one treads down a precious vine!

CHAPTER XXIX.

GOOD-BY, SWEETHEART.

"THERE!" exclaimed Mrs. Ingram, when Portia quietly requested a cessation of the bridal preparations which her mother and sisters were forwarding with alacrity. "I knew it! With so many meddling — Mr. Allerton and Mr. Mallory and that red-headed adventuress! I never half-believed in it, anyway."

Portia explained that it was all her own doing; that, for reasons sufficient to herself, she had changed her mind. And she put an end to all hope of patching up the affair by assuring them that she knew what she was doing, and that nothing could induce her to change her decision. She escaped the storm of argument, remonstrance and even entreaty, by going to her room and remaining there throughout the morning.

Portia had fought out her battle with herself the night before. She had turned the matter over and about in every conceivable position and attitude, and from each and every point of view she

had seen that their two paths pointed in different directions. If they walked together, she would have to go his way, or he hers. She knew with what concentration of purpose he pursued his own will, and she did not make the mistake of crude conceit, and fancy her will-power the greater. Either she would gradually drift into his ways, or they would be driven farther and farther apart.

She had been given an unmistakable glimpse into the world of evil, of which her wise father had not left her in ignorance. To him, "as wise as serpents, as harmless as doves," had a real meaning. His children were in a wicked world, and he did not leave them in the dark as to the nature of the evils they would have to encounter. It required but one keen, comprehensive glance for Portia to recognize what it was she faced, and she knew at once what to do with it.

Only a half-dozen letters, one written fifteen years ago — just two years after Mrs. Dare's marriage, and during her husband's absence on a long commercial tour; the others written at wide intervals, the latest dating two years ago.

They ran the usual course of such inconsiderate follies: confessions of hopeless love, declarations of undying devotion, passionate pleadings, through elaborate artifice and treachery to the inevitable end — disgust and hatred.

This sudden flash of light on Irwin's past revealed to Portia more plainly than years of ordinary associa-

tion could have done, the real nature of her lover, and the real character of his love. With time and custom and waning freshness, his love for her, too, would fade and die, and perhaps turn to hatred.

She shuddered at the thought, and, springing up, began hurriedly to collect all his presents and fasten them securely into a package.

There was a good deal of jewelry: a watch, bracelets, pins and ear-rings. The remainder of the package consisted of books, beloved for their own sake.

When she was through, she sat down beside the window and endeavored to fix her mind on Curtis's "Prue and I." When before had Curtis failed to charm her thoughts?

When she had read one sentence over and over a dozen times without catching the first glimmer of its meaning, she closed the book and sat staring idly out upon the ripening wheat fields.

The sultry summer was at hand; her springtime idyl was ended. Very soon Autumn's chill would wither the leaves; then Winter's icy breath would sweep them away as Death sweeps away the generations.

She felt old and experienced, heart-sick and disgusted. How could she have made such a mistake! The freshness had gone out of her life. It would never seem the same again. There was a taint upon everything. A strange dullness and heaviness and *ennui* had settled upon her world

and robbed it forever of its glory. Her very soul seemed stupefied.

How was it, then, that she suddenly covered her face and sobbed aloud? What was this that shot through the numbness of her heart, keen and poignant, like the thrust of a dagger?

Only a sudden flash of memory — a gleam from the past. She saw the dark alluring face bent beseechingly toward her, the splendid dark eyes looking mournfully into hers, and heard the tender voice passionately murmuring, "My love, my love! if you should die now, or in any way go out of my life, I do not know how I should manage to live on without you."

Portia, leaning her head against the facing of the open window, moaned aloud. She had come so near a human soul! She had moved it to such agony! Had she the right to cast it from her? But he had said the same thing to that other woman! He had kissed her in the same way — and now he hated her.

Repentant? Yes, now that the punishment had come. The decision was his own doing, not hers. Each human being determines his own act, and must himself suffer the consequences. Though the law may not hold him accountable, his punishment awaits him as surely as that of the convicted criminal.

"I cannot love him," she said, "but I pray for him."

Even Christ had to buy the right to forgive sin; buy it with pain and anguish of body and mind.

Then she thought of her rival and wondered if she too had thrilled with gratitude at the greatness of the precious love that had fallen to her lot? And had he laughed in his heart over the ineffable weakness of women?

And that was what the men of the world were like!

She recalled his words, "All men are wicked."

"And I am in this wicked world!" she cried. "How am I to go on? Whom shall I trust?"

There was a tap at her door. Portia sat down and opened her book. "Come in," she said, a frown of pain between her brows.

Mrs. Ingram entered, with a troubled, uncertain expression on her face. "Portia, Mr. Irwin is down-stairs, and wants to see you."

"I cannot see him, mamma."

"Portia, that isn't fair. He may be able to explain it all. And that woman — I would much rather believe him than her. Come, Portia, be reasonable."

"Mamma, I am not going to see him. She may be a wicked woman, but she told the truth. Those were his letters, I know, and it would be weak and foolish and sinful to reject her evidence because the truth hurts. If you wish to listen to his excuses and explanations, you can do so, mamma, but I shall not see him."

Half an hour after she heard him taking his leave and, all unconsciously, turned to catch one last glimpse of the man whom she had learned to love. When she saw him going away, humiliated and miserable — yes, he looked wretched — the wild impulse seized her to rush down and speak to him — merely to say farewell kindly, and to entreat him to try to live a better, more unselfish life, for her sake, if not for his own.

Hadn't she been too severe? What right had she to condemn him?

She turned away determinedly. She pitied him deeply, she forgave him with all her heart, but nothing, nothing could ever bring back the old love and reverence and wondering admiration. Her confidence in him was gone forever.

That night Prince Irwin received his betrothal gifts. But he had resolved not to give up so easily. He could not believe in his defeat; it seemed incredible. If Portia would not see him, he would force her to listen to him in another way. She could not prevent his writing.

He wrote again and again. His letters were very eloquent and poetic. But when Portia began to return them unopened a singular change developed within him; he felt suddenly resigned: he felt almost as if he had made an escape. The conviction had come over him that even this passion would have cooled; the capability of a profound enduring love was no longer his.

He fled to the seashore, and soon was writing back from Newport of the renewed relish with which he again returned to the pleasures of civilized society.

His going made no difference with Mrs. Dare, who continued her flirtations amid the shadowy recesses of the locust grove in the rear of the hotel. As the Ingram ladies always managed to be out of the way when she called, she finally ceased her overtures in that direction, and went on with her pursuit of happiness undeterred by their evident disapproval, or by fear of the ban which the world sets against those who disobey its laws. What cared she for the world or its edicts? And yet, sooner or later, everything must be paid for.

Allerton returned to the lessons as if nothing had happened. He felt, in a measure, responsible for the trouble his friend had caused, and could not go away until he saw how it was with Portia. And then — he had not settled with Mallory.

He was surprised to find her so little changed. She did not hesitate to mention Irwin's name. "It was all a mistake," turning the leaves of her book in an absent way. "We knew so little about him; he was very different from what I imagined him. A friend of yours, I thought" —

"I know," he exclaimed as she paused; "I was fascinated with him, too, when I was young. I ought to have warned you."

"You did, but we all thought your judgment of men too severe. If you had not disliked Mr. Mallory for no cause — but you were not to blame; no one was to blame; and we will waste no more words over it. We will go on with our Logic and Mental Philosophy, if you please. If they are the guides to sound and accurate conclusions they pretend to be, then we cannot have too much of Logic and Mental Philosophy."

For several weeks the lessons went on bravely, when Portia's courage seemed suddenly to flag. She grew more and more languid until Allerton, seeing her need of stimulus, of sympathy and cheer, again spoke of Irwin, and said how sorry he was for all that had happened.

"Oh! is there any use?" she interrupted. "It is all passed and buried; let it rest. There! I didn't mean to be rude; I am often rude to you, I fear, and you are always so kind. Once I thought you were out with me — that you did not consider me quite good enough for your friend."

"You thought that!" he exclaimed. "How could you?" Then added "It was the other way. I knew he wasn't good enough for you."

There was a moment's silence, in which Allerton looked at the listless girl and wondered what effect a full confession of his own state of mind would have on her. Portia began to move her hands restlessly. She was not observing him at all.

"Mr. Allerton, I cannot go on with my lessons this morning. Somehow I — I feel so dull, and my head aches," keeping her eyes steadily on the page before her. "O, no!" throwing the book down; "I might as well give it up at once. I don't know my lessons at all; I will have to give them up for good. It is all spoiled — everything is spoiled! You needn't come over just to hear my lessons any more, Mr. Allerton; there isn't any use. But you must come to see us, and you must forgive me, for I really cannot help it."

She rose hurriedly, and was about to leave the room when Allerton held out his hand. "I may not see you again before I leave," he said; "I will probably start for Boston this week." He spoke rapidly, and with a certain animation, and continued to hold the hand mechanically given him.

"To Boston? Not for long, I hope."

"I do not know; I may possibly stay."

"O, no! And give up The Oaks and all the good work you have begun here! Why should you do that?"

"Why?" he repeated, looking at her steadily. "There is something I must tell you before I go. Have you never guessed it, Portia — that I love you? Now, do you advise me to go, or to stay?"

Portia drew her hand away, looking for a moment as if she did not understand, then she did a curious thing; she laughed. "Corinne is right," she said, "it's a contagion; one catches it from the other."

Allerton regarded her with unsmiling intensity. "I know my own heart at last," he went on. "I loved you from the first, but I was a fool, and didn't know it. You pleased me better than any one I ever knew. Then, when I began to understand the power of the feeling that had gotten hold of me, I fought desperately against it, but," drawing a deep breath, "it grew more and more unmanageable; then when Prince Irwin came — Portia," the solemnity of his voice changing to sweet entreaty, — "if you could only despise that fraud as he deserves, and love me! Couldn't you? Won't you try?"

"How can you speak so of him?" interrupted Portia sternly. "He was your friend, and he always spoke well of you."

It did not once occur to her how differently this declaration would have been received a few short months ago. She had grown accustomed, resigned, to the distance he had put between them. He seemed as far removed from any thought of tenderness as the merest stranger.

Portia had not lived long enough in the world to feel any special need of this kind of love. Irwin's passionate preference had kindled an answering appreciation which with familiar association had deepened into a disinterested attachment. Otherwise, her love for her parents and sisters had satisfied her. Her first liking for Allerton had been merely the exuberant outburst of an unusual

mind at finding itself for the first time understood, which, uninterrupted, would doubtless have developed into passionate love, but now lay buried long past recognition or remembrance.

"He always spoke well of you," she repeated.

"O, yes! I know," he exclaimed, and stood looking at her a moment. Yes, he thought, with a heavy sinking of the heart, she was quite beyond his reach. Then he held out his hand again: "Good-by!"

"Don't go," she entreated. "How foolish — wicked — to desert your work and everything for a mere fancy! Stay and see how easily you will get over it when there is no longer any rivalry to keep you stirred up."

How old and staid Portia had grown!

"Do you think I want to go?" he said, with a strange, sad smile. "No, I hate the thought of it; but is there any other way? Will you take the responsibility of advising me to stay? I am doing no good here; my interest in it is all forced."

She looked at him earnestly for a moment. "You know what is best for yourself, perhaps, and should do whatever seems for your own good. We shall miss you; I dread to have you leave, it will be so lonely. But I could not venture to decide for any one — I have made such a fearful mistake myself. I hope if you do go, you will find yourself happier for the change; I am afraid we have not always been considerate of your feel-

ings. We have taken it too much for granted that you were sufficient to yourself; that you had no need of sympathy and appreciation."

He made a gesture of denial. "O, no! you were always kind," and he turned to leave the room.

Portia called after him: "You will find Corinne in the parlor. Do not forget to bid her good-by. She has always been your friend, and would feel hurt if you went away without a word of farewell to her."

Mechanically Allerton turned toward the parlor. On the threshold he paused, struck with a certain forlornness, a settled dejection in the figure leaning listlessly upon the window-sill. For the first time he observed that Corinne had changed. "You are not looking well, Miss Corinne," he said.

Corinne started from her listless attitude. "O, yes!" she exclaimed, with sudden animation, "I'm quite well, only a little lazy. I'm glad you came in; I was just wondering what on earth we could do to get up a little excitement. Since the sudden conclusion of Portia's romance, we are at a loss what to do with ourselves. I have an invitation to a wedding next week, only somehow I don't care to go to the city just now. Salina wants me to come up to L—— and be her bridesmaid; she's made up her mind to marry her father's choice — an old widower and 'horrid,' as Salina admits, but 'rich as Crœsus, and in his dotage.' It's plain Salina has sold herself."

"Yes," returned Allerton, in a tone of disgust, "as thoroughly as Judas for his thirty pieces of silver."

"Well, why not?" demanded Corinne aggressively. "If love isn't attainable, isn't money the next prize on the market? I have always had a presentiment that it was my fate to go for money; a chattel in the market, and not one of those rare and radiant maidens who love and are beloved."

"You must not think that," he rejoined earnestly; "no one, especially no woman, should think of marriage unless urged to it by real love. I have seen so much desolation from the lack of it that I have come to regard love as the chief law, the principal force and significance of life."

Corinne listened with a keen, attentive glance. Then she said, with an odd smile, "You expect to marry for love, of course?"

"Certainly, or not at all."

"Perhaps you consider love transferable; to be shifted to suit circumstances or convenience?"

"Fancied love may be, but not the real," he said, speaking with a weariness and dejection equal to her own.

"But how is one to distinguish between the two?"

"Real love is not always thinking of self, but looks, first of all, to the good of the beloved."

Corinne turned away petulantly. "It's a monstrous disease, that's what it is! A fever that

racks and rends you, and leaves you at last sifted and shaken and lifeless, but thanking your stars you are not bound past escape to the object of your infatuation."

"You have described the false," he said, with a faint smile. Then he arose. "I must bid you good-by," he said. "I start for Boston Tuesday, and will not be able to come over again. It may be for years, and it may be forever, as the old song says. I am not going to believe that you spoke your own thoughts when you said you should marry for money; I know you have a higher standard than that."

"Yes, I hope so," murmured Corinne, stunned by the sense of desolation that seemed suddenly to settle darkly over her soul. She did not rise, but sat looking at him with wide eyes and a deepening pallor about the mouth.

"Some day I hope to see you the happy wife of a husband in every way worthy of you."

"A happy wife!" she cried, in a faint burst of scorn.

"I can think of no brighter fate, nor one more likely."

"You are not going away to — to stay?"

"I think it is best," he rejoined, averting his face.

"I am sorry. I hoped you would be contented here," in a tremulous tone. "I "— She ceased, apparently unable to go on.

Allerton gazed in apparent abstraction upon the waving hemlock-trees outside. He was too dull and miserable and impatient to feel much sympathy for another's sorrow, especially when he considered it of a transient and hollow nature. He could think of nothing comforting to say, and waited in silence for her to go on.

"I don't want you to go," she began impetuously; then suddenly burst forth in a sort of wail, "Oh! I can't bear it."

She turned away, and flinging her arms on the table beside her, buried her face out of sight.

Allerton looked down upon this beautiful, grovelling figure with mingled compassion and alarm. "Don't say that," he entreated; "it only makes my duty the harder."

"I wish I could make it impossible," she cried, springing up. "Don't go! please do stay, won't you? do, do!"

A train of thought previously reasoned out, rushed through Allerton's mind. He had never given Corinne credit for any depth of feeling; she would soon recover, and thank him in her heart for his honesty. It was extremely unpleasant, but it was plainly his duty, for her own good, to give this girl's consuming vanity a severe wound.

"It is not because I want to go," he began, in a changed tone of voice; "I want to stay, but only because — I thought you had guessed it; because I love your sister. Wouldn't it seem to you

like the foolish moth fluttering around the fatal flame?"

Corinne, reaching out blindly for a chair, would have fallen had not Allerton quickly caught her.

"Forgive me!" he entreated, replacing the half-unconscious figure in the chair. His heart throbbed thickly, and he began mechanically to fan her with his palmetto hat.

Corinne lifted her eyes and stared at him with a dazed, bewildered expression.

"Say that you forgive me, and I will take myself forever out of your sight," he breathed piteously.

"Go, then; go!" she cried, with a repellent gesture. "I hate you!" At that instant some one opened the door, then hastily closed it. Allerton departed without further ceremony. In the hall he encountered his intellectual friend, Mr. Crugar; neither glanced at the other.

"Did I interrupt a tender love scene?" Mr. Crugar inquired of Corinne as he entered the parlor a few minutes later.

"Ask him, if you are not afraid to," exclaimed Corinne, with a mocking laugh. "I do not think his meditations are of love just now." And with a few clever, dexterous sentences Corinne managed to give the impression that Allerton had just offered himself, and been refused with scorn.

CHAPTER XXX.

IN THE LOCUST GROVE.

DURING the next half-hour Corinne talked incessantly. The coolness and subtlety of her lively sparring completely baffled the inquisitive Mr. Crugar, and surprised even herself. But when Blanche and Portia at last came to her relief, she lost no time in making her escape, tossing back at him over her shoulder a merry sally.

Crugar looked after her with an actual pang of disappointment. "Oh! come, don't go yet," he entreated. Corinne had never before seemed so attractive. "Your sister has certainly heard good news," he added, as her quick step was heard mounting the stair; "I never saw her so bright, and witty, and charming."

"She is invited to a wedding; perhaps that's it," suggested Portia, having assured herself that he was in earnest.

"Wit and good-humor rarely go together," said unobservant Blanche argumentatively. "It takes disaster and calamity and bitterness of soul to

sharpen one's wits. The rich and healthy and comfortable are usually steeped in dullness. If Corinne was witty, she must have had toothache or something; it isn't her normal condition."

Corinne fled to her room; no one should know of the stab she had received. Ordinarily she hated solitude, with its baffling thoughts, its inexorable questionings, but in the turmoil and confusion that had overtaken her and her plans, she turned instinctively to the friendly shelter.

She opened drawer after drawer, and box after box, seeking distraction in her poor little treasury of jewels and laces and feminine trinkets, but she scarcely saw them. For several minutes she stood gazing blankly through the window, then threw herself on the bed and sobbed aloud. "What shall I do?" she cried, frightened at the sudden blackness that had descended on her frivolous life. "How am I to live on? Oh! I shall die, I know I shall. I want to; why should I continue to live?"

The door opened, and Portia entered without the usual preliminary knock. She had come for her hat, which Corinne, having an economical turn of mind, was in the habit of borrowing.

"Oh! excuse me, Corinne; I didn't know you were here, or I would have knocked. Mr. Crugar is gone, and I am going down to the rose arbor. Will you come, too?"

"No," said Corinne, turning her face away.

"What is the matter? Aren't you well?"

"Nothing's the matter; I am tired. Go away, please."

"Why, Corinne, your face is as hot and red! I hope you're not taking a fever." Portia placed her cool palm on her sister's forehead, but it did not stay there long. Corinne threw it off angrily.

"Nothing's the matter, I told you! Can't you understand? Go away," raising her hand with a childish motion of fierce dismissal. "Go away, I tell you, or I'll — I'll hit you!"

Portia hastened from the room, as stunned by the threatened blow as if it had actually fallen.

On the stairway she paused, gazing absently before her. "Poor Corinne, poor hurt child! I have done you no injury; I am not less desolate than you, but you cannot see that now, and it is easier for me to bear disappointment, I have so many other things; and then, I had not counted on anything in that line. We must take our beating, and profit by it if we can. I seem to be older than the others; I seem to have lived ages; my mind is old and experienced. I must help Corinne to bear this thing; in a few days the jealousy, the 'temporary insanity,' as the legal lights name it, will have passed, and Corinne will be sorry and ashamed. O, yes! we must help each other. That is what life is for."

When Allerton returned the title deed to The Oaks, Mr. Ingram did not appear to be surprised.

He took it and locked it away in his desk. "It is still yours," he said; "the other legatee, anticipating a possible discouragement on your part, has resigned all claim in your favor, so, whether you go or stay, the property is yours."

"Mr. Ingram, who is this other mysterious person?"

"I am not at liberty to tell. It would be ungrateful as well as unwise in you to refuse the gift, unless you have some insurmountable objection. A little visit home will do you no harm; it is well to get off from your work occasionally — to view it from a distance. You will be surprised to see the real progress you have made. You will see the mistakes, and their remedies as well, and you will want to come back." But Allerton did not consider it necessary to argue the case, nor to furnish his reasons for deserting the field.

Judge Pirtle too refused to take his "good-by" seriously. "Why, man alive, you're not going off the very day of our barbecue! And you've never once tasted burgoo! Come, if you must go, put it off a day, and come to the barbecue, and witness the sacrificial offering of forty blue-grass sheep roasted whole. You don't know anything about Kentucky until you've been to a barbecue, and heard what a miserable sneak your Republican President is, and what noble-souled, sleek-tongued office-seekers this blue-grass Eden of the world produces."

Allerton consented to defer his departure a day. Not that he cared for the barbecue, nor the mysterious burgoo, but he did not wish again to risk giving offence to his friend.

He went in the morning, thinking to have done with the unpalatable duty as soon as possible. To his surprise, the nameless charm of the buoyant sylvan scene took hold of him, and held his attention for hours. The green turf beneath, the tall, tall trees overhead, and the five or six thousand people merrily grouped under the far-stretching canopy of green, made a picture as strikingly rich and picturesque as that of any Old-World festival immortalized by poet or painter.

He cared nothing about local politics, and paid little attention to the "silver-tongued" oratory. He saw very few whom he knew; the crowd was so vast he felt almost alone. He caught one glimpse of Mrs. Dare's flashing eyes and shining reddish hair; she was evidently having a beautiful time with her "chivalrous" circle of admirers, who also seemed to be enjoying themselves.

As Allerton kept on the outskirts of the crowd, he saw nothing of the Ingrams, who were near the speakers' stand, where the crowd was denser and also more dignified.

Even the mad rush when dinner was announced failed to break the simple woodland charm. It did not seem vulgar to be clamorously hungry in such a happy-go-lucky assemblage, under such a balm-

breathing atmosphere. What lavish abundance of everything! no one need go away empty. He drank a cup of scalding-hot burgoo, dipped from an immense cauldron by a patronizing colored gentleman in a snow-white jacket, and he found it savory and satisfying; yet he was not in a holiday mood, and early in the afternoon mounted his steed and turned his face homeward.

He had gone but a little way when he was joined by Dr. Savage, who had been called away to see a patient. So congenial were these two that any chance for a free interchange of thought was an event to both, and Allerton was easily persuaded to take a longer route home, for the sake of prolonging the pleasure.

In this way, Mallory starting some minutes later, failed to overtake them; he had just learned of Allerton's intended departure, and having sincerely repented the pain and indignity he had inflicted on him, had made up his mind to an humble apology.

When he found that he had somehow missed Allerton, he concluded to go home and write the apology, to leave at the house in case he should not see him.

With this peace-offering, his gun and pointer dog — a dog and gun excuse one's presence anywhere — he set out for The Oaks. A colored boy answered his ring by coming around the corner of the house, and reporting nobody at home. They'd all gone to the barbecue.

Mallory decided at once not to trust the fellow with his note, and he lingered along the woods and fields, shooting at the field-larks to which his pointer Sancho continually drew his attention, hoping that chance would enable him to carry out his pacific purposes.

It was nearly five o'clock when Allerton, riding slowly homeward, was startled by the report of a gun so near and sharp that his horse sprang half across the road with a sudden, sidewise movement, precipitating its rider into the dust.

As Allerton sprang to his feet, more angry than hurt, he saw Mallory coming across the road toward him. Then he noticed Mallory's horse hitched in the edge of the woods, and it flashed through his mind that this hot-tempered, vindictive Southerner had intended to kill him.

"Why should I hesitate an instant to leave a place where the strongest feeling I seem to have inspired is such hatred as this?" he exclaimed.

"Allerton," called Mallory, "I hope your fall didn't hurt you."

Allerton did not check his horse at the sound of these friendly words, as Mallory had expected, but merely said, casting over his shoulder a stern, accusing glance, "I am sorry, Mr. Mallory, that you haven't better thoughts and better deeds to occupy your mind and hands!" and passed on, leaving Mallory glaring after him with flashing eyes, the hot blood tingling through his veins.

"How can one live on peaceable terms with a suspicious cold-natured bigot like that? Better thoughts and deeds, indeed! It is well for you, you self-righteous egotist, that I have already given you one beating, else you'd not be riding away so high and mighty now!" All his kindly feeling had vanished. "I'm glad now I didn't leave that foolish letter. I'll not make another friendly overture soon; the porcupine! Why should I? Hasn't he done me tenfold the injury I ever did him?"

He called to Sancho, who stood patiently pointing a flock of birds in the field, and hurried home.

At six o'clock the following morning Allerton took the train from the nearest station for Louisville. He had left everything in Claxton's charge — indefinitely. He had pulled Claxton out of the slough again, and had exacted a promise from him that he would let him know the first drink he took, that he might place some one else in charge. Possibly this trust might inspire a stronger desire to justify it.

Allerton sat alone on the train, engrossed in his own thoughts. He heard nothing of the thrilling news, eagerly discussed throughout the car — of the murder committed the afternoon before at the barbecue. He bought a Courier-Journal, but scarcely looked at it.

At Louisville he bought a through ticket to

Boston, and was soon whirled away beyond all reach of rumors from Athens.

The desertion of the gentleman we have just mentioned did not affect the barbecue in the least. The speakers continued to bemoan the inefficiency of the grasping officials at Washington, the young people strolled about in couples, the base-ball match went on, and Mrs. Dare and her lively friends kept on shooting at a target. Judge Pirtle, Gen. Witherspoon and a friend from the city, had withdrawn from the noisy crowd and were smoking and discussing the political situation, stretched full length on the green turf. They held precisely the same views, hence a comfortable inertia prevailed.

"Too close a union tends to despotism," declared Gen. Witherspoon, in a desperate spurt of energy. "Weaken the State government and you convert this republic into a consolidated empire."

"Yes," Judge Pirtle returned, in a failing voice. "It is never safe to trust one man, nor one set of men, with too much power. When they get full control of the reins and of the power to further their own or their party's interest, the public welfare goes clean out of their minds."

"And it is impossible, of course," said the city gentleman, "to get a set of men into office who have the requisite honesty and the firmness of character to stand fast to their own convictions and to act on them, regardless of consequences."

Each of the harmonious party had had his say, and there was an end of it. They relapsed into ignominious torpitude.

Suddenly the sound of a pistol shot split the air, followed by a loud shriek. The torpid smokers sprang to their feet with the simultaneous ejaculation, "What's that?"

The next instant a woman rushed past them, with white face and starting eyes, and soon vanished like a flash among the startled crowd.

There is nothing more contagious than terror. The sight of that panic-stricken figure set the whole multitude into frantic commotion. Soon the whole picnic grounds were deserted, save by one helpless invalid, who sat down on an empty beer-keg, daunted by the long distance he would have to traverse.

To this invalid a tall, well-dressed young man, evidently from the city, addressed himself. "It is merely a Kentucky custom — this ending everything with a murder?" he asked in a captious, querulous tone.

"Murder!" ejaculated the old man eagerly. "Who's murdered?"

"A young man; Jack Snead, I think his name is."

"Jack killed? O, Lordy! Poor Jack! Who did it?"

"Nobody seems to know. He had strolled off with a lady — they had been shooting at a target.

It was an accident, possibly. A pistol with her name on it was found in the weeds. A Mrs. Ware from New York, they said."

"Mrs. Dare, sir. She could do it if she took the notion. A little mite of a woman, sir, but with the nerve of a Judith. A great pity, sir, that a fine, soft-spoken woman should be so fierce."

Yes, the stranger admitted, it was a pity. Then he lighted a cigar, and seating himself upon a neighboring beer-keg, listened with mild interest to the reports brought back from time to time by the returning crowd.

There had been drinking and shooting, and Jack had been in the midst of it. Mrs. Dare had promised to marry the man who could pick out the eye of the peacock painted on her fan, at a hundred yards. Jack had been the successful contestant. There had been a good deal of chaffing, and Jack had made a feint of running off with his prize. Farther than that no one seemed able to go.

Mrs. Dare was found seated in her carriage, pale, but composed. The driver was nowhere in sight, so her flight had ended there. A crowd surrounded the carriage, staring in curiously, the women with blank horror, and even the men lately her admirers, in awe-struck wonder at this sudden revelation of an uncanny depravity beneath a mask of innocent, artless beauty.

She seemed willing to relate all she knew. She had heard a sound in the shrubbery, and turning

suddenly had seen a pistol pointed at herself — not at her companion at all. She screamed and ran, heard Jack fall, but did not look back, expecting every moment to be shot down herself.

She told her story in a straightforward manner, which no cross-questioning could vary, though her repeated declaration that she did not know the man who held the pistol, that she could not recall his looks, and had no knowledge of any enemy who might desire her death, were not believed, and only served to confirm the general suspicion against her.

"A clever actress," said the captious stranger who went up with the rest to take a look at the supposed murderess. "But if she shot the man, it was an accident; she hasn't the courage for a deed like that. My belief is that she has flattered and flirted with the fellow until, in a fit of desperation, he has blown out his own brains. In her fright she threw the pistol into the weeds and invented this story."

Mrs. Dare was allowed to go back to the hotel. "Come, Theresa," she said to her maid, as soon as she reached her own room, hurriedly gathering up a few small articles, "we must leave this place to-night. We will hide in the woods until dark, and then go to the station."

But the girl shrank away from her with a frightened look.

"What, Theresa! do you believe it, too?" she cried despairingly. "How can you? Could these hands kill a man? But they think I did it — I saw it in their looks; and they'll take me to jail, Theresa; they'll lock me in a horrible cell! It would drive me crazy! And the trial — the jeering people — and the New York papers copying everything — I couldn't stand it! O, Theresa, be quick! Here's a shawl; we'll go down the back way. O, Theresa! I love you for this."

And the unhappy creature, with her poor dependant, went out into the darkness. They flew to the woods, they wandered on blindly and dumbly, trembling at every shadow, starting wildly at every mysterious sound. All night they searched for the railroad station. At dawn they found the track, and followed it to a depot. Here they were arrested and taken back to Athens — torn, dishevelled, haggard-eyed creatures of despair — as soon as their flight was discovered, a guard had been sent to each station along the road.

When they were brought into the hotel, even the vacant-eyed loafers around the door pitied the wretched woman whose bright flashings in and out had amused and interested them. Even Mallory had found her attractive; there could be no higher praise than his approval.

When Mrs. Dare and her escort entered the hotel, Mallory was one of the group of gentlemen

whom she passed in the hall. One of her swift, keen glances showed her that he alone turned his back as they passed. Mrs. Dare was not the woman to understand this action, meant to spare, to shield her, and not, as she supposed, to disclaim her acquaintance. Her face, which had been pale and despairing, flushed suddenly, and a look of anger and wounded pride flashed from her eyes.

Brought to bay, she stood her ground with intrepidity and courage. She acknowledged that the pistol found in the weeds was hers; it had been given her by her husband as a means of protection when travelling, but she had only that day learned how to use it. They had been practising at a target, and she had dropped the pistol as she ran.

The research into the domestic history of the prisoner at the bar was minute and searching; but we are not going to spend any time over it. The subject possibly has its fascination, but it is an unhealthy one, furnishing "wholesome entertainment to neither man nor beast." We gladly leave it to others more skilled in threading the underground avenues of passion and vanity leading to crime.

When at last permission was given to the prisoner to speak, she said she had only a few words to say. She said her few words in a quiet, even tone, and with an indifference to their possible effect which lent them an air of simple, unaffected truth.

"There is one thing I have withheld," she said; "I did it from fear of bringing suspicion on a man who may be innocent — who probably is innocent of this crime; but the oath was to tell the truth, which means the whole truth. After he was shot the young man called out — I heard him as I ran — 'O, Mallory, Mallory!' That is all he said. I do not know why he said it; I saw no one; but he said it."

The judge looked startled; a hush fell on the audience. The prosecuting attorney questioned her sharply, and the judge sternly charged her to take heed of the terrible meaning of an oath, but nothing could make her vary her statement.

"Of course nobody believes her," said Mallory's friends. But the rumor went abroad, and Jack's relatives demanded an investigation.

"Of course, Arthur, you can prove an alibi," said his uncle, Gen. Witherspoon.

Mallory was silent a moment. "I am afraid not," he said with a slight flush.

"Then I suppose they'll have to commit you for trial. It will end in nothing, of course. I'll go your bail to any amount, and that Jezebel — I firmly believe she killed Jack — is acquitted from lack of evidence."

CHAPTER XXXI.

SUMMONED.

It was long past dusk when Allerton arrived at the familiar old Fitchburg station. The diversified crowd which rushed off the train looked the same as that which had rushed on when he started away.

He took a street-car up-town and walked home from Washington Street. Everything looked the same; only himself was changed. He felt like a scarred veteran returning from the wars; a veteran of the defeated side.

How strange a problem was life! He had studied it seriously, he had worked over it faithfully, he had followed the great universal rule — the Golden Rule — and yet it had all come out wrong.

Had not he lived up to his principles — been true to himself? What else could he have done? Perhaps it was that he had attempted an impossible thing! He recalled a passage from Webster, in which the voice of authority assures a mistaken world that it is impossible to conquer prejudice. Was that the solution of his failure?

It was with a strange, dull heart-ache that Allerton stood at the door, waiting the answer to his ring. He walked in on the unexpectant group with a grave, every-day air. He thought himself strangely indifferent until he beheld the loved faces once more.

His father looked up from his evening paper with calm, grave eyes; his mother, rocking placidly back and forth in her easy chair, barely lifted her retrospective gaze from the graceful figure of her daughter, half reclining upon the library table, and utterly absorbed in a new magazine. The three pairs of eyes stared a moment at the tall figure in the doorway, then there was a wild rush, an outburst of joy that quickened the beating of his numb heart and almost brought the tears to his eyes.

They wanted to know everything all at once. There were so many questions to ask! But the evening waned, and at twelve o'clock he had scarce begun. In the morning, he promised himself, he would tell them everything. But in the morning his communicative mood had passed. Their interest, however, remained; as vivid, as minute, as anatomical as ever: they were never weary of hearing him. He told them everything except the one thing that now dominated his whole thoughts.

If they suspected him of keeping back anything they did not speak of it, and he was unspeakably grateful for their forbearance.

He revisited his old haunts, but found that their charm was gone. He sought out his old associates, and was surprised to find how far and how fast they had drifted apart. Many had forgotten where he had gone and upon what occasion. "Been sheep-farming?" they asked. "Where's your shot-gun and bowie-knife? How many howlers from Bitter Creek did you kill? Our little private musicales and symphony concerts and Monday lectures will scarcely satisfy your pampered taste. Well, there's the minstrels; we'll ease you down gradually."

Allerton thought of the proud self-satisfied Athenians he had just left, and laughed. And yet he was angry, too.

Many of his friends were still out of town. He saw nothing of Irwin, nor Mrs. Horton.

Flushing was married. He was in a great hurry when Allerton met him; only had time for a hurried interchange of greetings. He had an engagement to go with his wife to a lecture which begun in half an hour. Good-by! And he went flying down the street.

It was one of the Crichtons whom Flushing had married. In his indecision he had let both the Commonwealth Avenue belles escape him, and had consoled himself with Belle Crichton.

The next time Allerton encountered his friend he was engaged in making himself agreeable to a distinguished English gentleman who had been

the lion of the season at the various summer resorts. Flushing bowed and smiled rather reservedly. Allerton could see that for some reason he preferred a monopoly of his prize, and would have been irritated by the intrusion of a third person.

Allerton almost laughed when he recalled this incident. "I wouldn't go back to that old thraldom for any amount!" he said: "that empty chase after social honors." Yes, he had had that fever once; the adoration of — not our friend, but our dream of him or of her, which with increasing years and worldliness degenerates into the worship of our friend's success or position. His vision had cleared; his friendships had now no respect to worldly appurtenances.

He called on Nina frequently, and he found her as bright and interesting as ever. She still had her mission Sunday school over in South Boston, and she had lost none of her interest in the literary and scientific subjects they used to discuss with such keen relish. Recently she had been making a study of Hugh Miller, and was wonderfully impressed with the patient way in which he had burrowed into "the burial ground of the past," and discovered among the débris of creation the soul of man. She thought it might be good missionary work to introduce his works in the South, and offered her five volumes as a beginning.

Allerton accepted the books and thanked her

in behalf of the Kentucky village. He smiled amusedly as the picture of this young lady in pale blue cashmere, explaining Hugh Miller to the keen-eyed sarcastic old Gen. Witherspoon, presented itself to his mind.

"Here is a telegram, George," said Bertha, coming into the library with the yellow envelope in her hand. He had been at home three weeks, but had not yet succeeded in settling to his old pursuits.

He tore it open. "From Athens," he said. "Mallory is on trial for the murder of Jack Snead the afternoon of the barbecue, and I am his only witness to an alibi!"

"Murder!" echoed Bertha, sitting down.

"He was not at the barbecue in the afternoon; he was in my woods, six miles away, shooting birds."

After a few minutes' reverie, he told Bertha the whole incident in the lane, and gave it as his conviction that Mallory had not intended to harm him, as he had then thought. His movement, look and tone, as he recalled them, were not those of a murderer, he was sure.

A money order, covering his expenses there and back, accompanied the dispatch. Evidently they feared a refusal.

Allerton looked at his watch, and sprang to his feet. It lacked only half an hour to train time.

Dreary indeed seemed the succeeding days in the

close, dusty cars, as he hastened back to Athens. "He has hated me so long, and not without cause," he thought, "now I have a chance to make it up to him. If I have been the thorn in his flesh that he has been in mine, he will be glad enough to forgive and be forgiven."

Gen. Witherspoon and Judge Pirtle were watching for him from the very spot where his loafing critics had scowled at him before. When they saw Allerton on the box with the driver their faces beamed with joy; this time his welcome was unmistakable.

They hurried him off to the court room, giving him on the way a hasty outline of all that had gone before. The testimony had established several damaging facts, all more or less distorted by prejudice, ignorance, superstition and the bewildering effect of an immense audience.

First, that the prisoner and the deceased had been rivals for the favor of Mrs. Dare. Second, that they had quarrelled only a few hours previous to the murder. Third, that he had left the grounds — here there was a confliction of testimony; some asserting before, others after the murder — and going home had changed his clothes, pretending to go out hunting. Fourth, that a figure of his height and complexion, though disguised past recognition in a long gray ulster, was seen hovering about the grove where the deceased and Mrs. Dare were seated.

When they entered the court room, one of the learned counsel for the defense had the floor. At the conclusion of his speech there was a whispered consultation among the party for the defense, and, without further delay, George Allerton was called to the witness stand.

There was a stir of surprise and expectation upon the part of the audience. In the almost painful silence which followed, Allerton was sworn, and, in quiet, distinct tones, proceeded to give in his evidence. There was a brief interchange of glances between the prisoner and witness before he began, but no token of recognition.

He gave an account of his encounter with the prisoner on the afternoon of the crime at almost the same instant as the murder. As the two places were six miles apart, the impossibility of Mallory's complicity in the crime was obvious. The innocence of the prisoner was established beyond a doubt.

Then in a moved tone Allerton spoke of the enmity existing between himself and the prisoner, and gave a graphic account of its origin. A thrill ran through the audience as he rehearsed that scene in the far-away South, of the young Confederate officer's tender care for the wounded enemy — an unknown private — in the very shadow of Federal guns. Of the recovery of the soldier and his return to his camp, the questioning of his superiors, and the enforced answers by which he all unwill-

ingly and unwittingly, betrayed his benefactor into the hands of enemies, and brought ruin and desolation upon the home that had sheltered him.

The effect was overwhelming. As Allerton concluded, the crowd began to cheer wildly. But the judge sternly repressed the demonstration.

The evidence was accepted as conclusive, and the prisoner released. His friends crowded around him to offer their congratulations. Allerton alone stood aloof; he was about to leave the court room when Mallory intercepted him. There was a slight hesitation in his manner as he did so, and an air of careful repression, as if more than anything he feared the loss of personal dignity — the breaking down of self-control.

He regarded Allerton with a strange timidity, but a glance was sufficient to show him how freely he was forgiven. Instead of accepting the hand cordially extended to greet him, he fell on Allerton's neck and, casting dignity and self-control to the winds, wept tears of mingled penitence and joy.

A cheer went up from the little assembly who had remained to witness this scene. There was no one to restrain them now, and round after round of applause resounded through the room.

With his hand still on Mallory's shoulder, Allerton said, "He saved my life once, and I never even thanked him."

"Yes; and how did I do it! A dog would have done no less, and done it more kindly."

"Then," said Allerton, with an uplifted countenance, "we are friends at last."

"Henceforth," declared Mallory, "we are brothers."

Much hand-shaking and concealing of pocket-handkerchiefs, and general facial disturbance ensued. But men are so afraid of being thought less cold and callous than statues of Scipio and Cæsar, that they usually cut pitiable figures under emotional excitement.

It was the invalid's interesting account of a stranger "about the size and general appearance of Mallory" who had brought him his first tidings of the murder that afternoon at the barbecue, which led to the hunting down and final arrest of Augustus Dare, commercial traveller and ex-husband of the fascinating Mrs. Dare. It was he instead of Mallory who had haunted the grove where the murder was committed.

Mr. Dare indignantly protested his innocence of this crime, and threatened dire vengeance for the outrage put upon him, as well as for the loss of his valuable time.

He said, furthermore, that there were twenty or thirty young scamps, much the worse for whiskey, shooting recklessly about over the barbecue grounds that day, and that he and his friend had had to dodge them half a dozen times to keep from being shot. If the authorities would look a little closer

home, among these walking armories of concealed weapons, perhaps they'd be a little more successful in finding the real criminal.

But these impotent ravings only served to stimulate the combativeness of the truculent officials, who having spent a good deal of the State's money to procure his arrest, did not propose to be frightened into letting him go so easily, though it did suddenly flash across their minds that his words suggested a possible solution of the mystery.

We will not attempt to follow this trial, which ended in Mr. Dare's acquittal. It furnished one of the memorable sensations of Athens, however, in the glimpse it gave into the dramatic past of the prisoner's divorced wife — the possible cause of all this trouble.

It is needless to refer to the newspaper reports at the time. It suffices to know that the cloud under which the brilliant Mrs. Dare took her flight from the blue-grass pastures was a very dense one.

In accordance with the old adage, "Murder will out," it was finally discovered that a reckless scape-grace son of Major Bumpus in attempting to put a hole through the crown of Jack's hat at forty paces, had missed his mark and sent his comrade's soul into the eternal unknown.

The trial was a brief one. The prisoner wept bitterly, the grief of his relatives was deep and unaffected, and the verdict was not long in coming: "Not guilty."

All felt its untruth, its glaring dishonesty, and yet no one wanted to punish the poor fellow.

No one complained except the presiding judge.

"It is a shame," he exclaimed, "that in this State such a deed has no penalty. It is with such fatuous, idiotic sentimentalism as this that we manage to keep up our reputation as a barbarous and blood-thirsty State!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

A HEROIC SOLDIER.

ALLERTON declined the ovation tendered him by Mallory's friends at the close of the trial, and went off alone to The Oaks. No one complained that that was not his way of doing things, nor made sarcastic remarks on his evident preference for his own society.

They understood him no better than formerly, but they began to like him better, and to find excuses for his odd ways. True, he was a Yankee, they said compassionately, but he couldn't help that.

Allerton called on Claxton, found him out of money and sober. Then he called on the Ingrams.

He found only Blanche and Portia at home. Corinne had gone to L—— to attend Salina's wedding. She had decided to go rather suddenly. Corinne had been in very low spirits, Blanche told him, until she decided to go; and they were only too glad to get rid of her. She had been fierce and fretful by turns, with intervals of sulking alone in her room.

She ate almost nothing, and seemed determined to die by starvation, if not from a broken heart. "You will starve," Blanche had told her, "if you don't eat more."

"I don't care," was the sullen reply. "I want to die."

"But your bones are beginning to show, Corinne. Look at your wrists! You used to have no bones. And ugly hollows are coming in your cheeks. I was startled yesterday to see wrinkles — yes, actual wrinkles — at the corners of your eyes. You'll soon be getting old, Corinne, if you don't mind!"

Corinne made no reply, but from that day she began to eat more. Then she wrote Salina that she had changed her mind and concluded to accept her invitation. Vanity had conquered where even the fear of death had failed.

Now they were receiving semi-weekly bulletins of parties, balls and beaux — especially Mr. Hardy — and of rapid increase in flesh and spirits. All traces of blighted hopes had vanished.

But Portia, when the first surprise at seeing him was over, showed signs of mental torpor which Allerton observed with pain. "It is like poor Cinderella after the ball," he thought compassionately. "The homespun and ashes are hard to bear after the silken attire and the flattery of the Prince."

But it was not altogether the loss of these agreeable adjuncts, but another loss which it would never have occurred to Allerton to interpret as a

deprivation, that had left Portia nerveless and dull. She missed the mental stimulus of her teacher's explanations, suggestions and encouragement — the almost daily contact with a vital and contagious energy and intellectual strength.

Portia did not know this, however, and attributed her heaviness to the long train of calamities which had of late kept the sunshine and cheer out of her life. First, her own humiliating bereavement, then poor Jack's violent death, the consequent arrest and trial of Mallory, and for the present the unaccountable advent of a malignant type of fever, which only the heroic dared approach, her father being absent now at the burial of one of the victims.

She admitted to Allerton that they missed him sadly, and expressed a hope that he was going to stay. But a keen glance at the face bent over a bit of crochet-work — formerly she had disdained crochet — showed him only a look of weariness and depression.

Then she began to speak of Corinne. She was very much afraid that her Aunt Skidmore would persuade Corinne into marrying that light-minded, frivolous Mr. Hardy. He was rich and of a respectable family, and Mrs. Skidmore did not see what else they could want.

"I was under the impression that Mr. Hardy was engaged to Miss Skidmore," said Allerton.

"So was I; but it seems that Jule has accepted

a rich Cuban whom she has known only a few weeks, and Aunt is very anxious to have Corinne and Mr. Hardy married at the same time. She craves the sensation of a double wedding; and then, she thinks she is doing a fine thing for her niece. But I hope Corinne will have the sense and resolution to act upon her own judgment, and especially to consult her own feelings in the matter."

As they went on talking of indifferent things Allerton's heart sank within him. She was drifting, not contentedly, but inertly, into the stagnant shallows of life. She had found the high plane of thought and feeling, and had been beaten back. She had given up the battle; she had surrendered to the strong force of conventionality. Spiritual degeneration and decay must follow unless another shock, more violent than all that had gone before, should come to arouse and rescue her.

The day following Allerton was again on his way to Boston.

Mr. Ingram did not return home after the burial of the fever victim. There were others needing attention, and all the family knew how useless it was to try to dissuade him from his ministrations, or to offer to share them. Often before he had been exposed to fevers without any injurious effect. "It is the old soldier," he said, "who is never struck."

It was Dr. Savage's belief that they had discovered the cause of the disease in a defective slop-drain, and now that the cause was removed, he hoped to save the remnant of the afflicted family and prevent further progress of the disease. A few of the frightened neighbors who had timidly offered their assistance, were much relieved to hear that there was no special need of their running the risk of spreading the disease.

Both Dr. Savage and Mr. Ingram had taken rigorous measures to keep their own families away. Mr. Ingram had locked the door on Blanche and Portia, who had disregarded his commands and gone to the very threshold, and stood arguing with their father through the window, against the injustice of those two keeping the whole of this service of mercy to themselves. But he seemed so well and cheerful that they returned home in calm resignation — a strange blind submission which they afterward recalled with wonder and futile self-reproach.

Two days afterward a messenger from Dr. Savage stood on the veranda where Mrs. Ingram and her two daughters sat.

Mr. Ingram was ill, very ill. No, there was no use going to him, he added, trembling at the effect of his words.

"No use! What do you mean?" And the three gazed at him with wild, blanched faces.

"Mr. Ingram died yesterday afternoon at three o'clock."

"Died — and I not there!" cried Mrs. Ingram in a strange, high voice. "Why did they keep it from us? But I am going now" —

"There really isn't any use," repeated the man.

"You — you haven't buried him?" said Portia, as cold as a stone.

"Yes; it was his request. He was afraid, at the last, that the fever might be contagious, and the poor Mason children, if they do get well, will be stone deaf. He didn't want no risks run on his account. And Dr. Savage promised if he took the fever you were to know nothing of it until he was well or buried."

"I'll never forgive the doctor," said Mrs. Ingram.

"But he did not have the fever. It was heart disease. No one could have done him any good. He was gone before any one knew it. Dr. Savage does not believe the fever is contagious; he kept his promise out of regard for him and his fears for his family."

They did not cry aloud; they sat quietly listening to all he had to tell. Portia did not even shed a tear. The tears were to come afterward in wild storm-bursts, with intervals of deadly calm. The other two wept unobtrusively as they heard how easily, how calmly he had let go his hold on life.

He had lain down in another room for a few minutes' rest. An hour afterward Dr. Savage had stolen softly in and found him resting indeed — the rest that never ends.

It was the death he would have chosen. He had fallen like the soldier in battle He had lived the highest life — the life of service.

In the sad oppressive days which followed, Portia began to realize how, in the past ten or twelve years, her father's service had increased in weight as his strength diminished, and she felt that he must long have looked forward with joy to the time when he should lay it down.

The best and brightest part of him must long before have passed over to the Other Side. He had lived in the thought of eternity until only deep and serious things — the great little things of every-day life — had any meaning to him. Life meant only a preparation for immortality. His path had been direct, straying less and less into the wilderness, keeping more and more in the great Light, until cruelty, selfishness, corruption, fell away. And God took him.

But where? Oh! if we only knew. Is it far away? Why have we no glimpse of the place He has prepared for those whom He has taken? Why in all these years has no message ever reached us from our loved ones, snatched suddenly away with no chance for a word of farewell?

Why? Our Father pities us, and he knows why. Perhaps a glimpse of the beauty which "it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive," would forever spoil us for this world, where there is yet work for us to do. And it is only a few

years until we, too, shall know. Cannot we keep watch in the brief interval of darkness, patiently serving out our time?

When some die it is only one less in the world: a clod from the wheel of Time, which no one misses. Others fall like the pillar of the temple; the roof falls in, the walls are down, the lights are out, and those who rejoiced in its shelter cry out in the midst of their darkness and desolation.

Such a disaster had befallen the house of Ingram. The mother and daughters mourned their broken staff, their light withdrawn. Love and grief, too, have their alloy. The servants bewailed lost shelter and food and clothing.

Through the autumn and winter the broken household held together. In the spring there were two weddings and a great sale. Corinne married the rich Mr. Hardy and went to the city to live. Blanche married Hugh Middleton and settled down into a model farmer's wife. The homestead was rented out, Mrs. Ingram having decided to make her home alternately with her two daughters Corinne and Blanche, an unexpected chance providing for Portia.

Mr. Ingram's only sister had married an eminent New York physician, her senior by several years. Since the death of her husband — Dr. Carew — some fifteen years or more ago, she had lived the greater part of the time at her country-seat on the Hudson.

Her son, a successful barrister, had married the daughter of a wealthy wholesale grocer and was living in the city. Neither he nor his wife had any real love for the country, and the little time they spent out of the city was usually spent at his father-in-law's Long Branch cottage.

Mrs. Carew now wrote to ask if Mrs. Ingram could spare her the remaining unmarried daughter for an indefinite season. She admitted that it would be very quiet, for although it was only April, she was already in her country home. Possibly it would be dull for a bright young girl. But this aunt's early life had been spent in the country, and in all these metropolitan years she had not lost her love for her country life. She would gladly pay Portia's travelling expenses, and be responsible as well for all the needful changes in her wardrobe.

Mrs. Ingram accepted this proposition with eagerness. Since her husband's death she had adopted all his opinions, especially those she had combated during his lifetime, and among them his belief in Portia's remarkable talents. Of course her aunt would not keep her mewed up in a country house all the time. She would give her a chance to see and learn something of the great metropolis.

And then, had not Portia captivated the fastidious Prince Irwin? Who knows but something might happen at last to fix Portia into a position

as splendid, as greatly to be coveted, as the one she had so deplorably missed?

Portia had learned to know and to love her Aunt Eleanor from her father. She loved her native State, but the home was broken up, the charm of her life there was gone, and she was glad of this chance to leave it and begin anew among new people and fresh surroundings.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HER COUNTRY'S FOE.

MALLORY had made up his mind to go abroad. Many things had conspired to urge him to this decision. It had been the intention of his parents to give him a year or two of foreign travel. But the very summer after his graduation at Yale death had robbed him of them both. Then the war came whooping down and swallowed up every other interest, and since the war the task of restoring his homestead and patrimonial estate to the old order and beauty of his father's lifetime had kept him busy.

But now he felt free to follow the impulse of restless impatience that had grown upon him lately — ever since his trial for murder had made him an object of public interest.

People came to Athens for the especial purpose of interviewing the hero of the biggest sensation the county had ever produced; stared at him as he passed; stopped him to make sympathetic or jocular remarks on the subject, and when he was at

the hotel, kept dropping in on him to hear from his own lips how a man felt on trial for his life.

He was sick of it, and felt if he was ever going abroad the time had come.

When every preparation for his departure was made he went over to bid Portia good-by, choosing a time when he knew that Blanche and her mother were away. He hated good-bys, and shrank from scenes of any sort, but he could not go away without seeing Portia.

She had changed; she had lost something: both had lost something. The old careless gayety was gone. Neither of them could ever come back to that again. He wished to express something of this, and then come away. But when he found how soon the old home-life was going to pieces, and that no permanent place had been provided for Portia, a new thought flashed over him like a sudden burst of light.

They looked at each other unsmilingly. "And you are really going across the ocean?" she said, and her eyes looked large and bright. "I am sorry, and yet I envy you."

He looked at her steadily for one moment. Had any of them anything better to offer her than he? He recalled the tender graciousness, the free generosity, the stately hospitality, that had characterized his mother's life, and the trivial round of the society woman seemed empty and purposeless in comparison.

"I hope you will be happy," she said. "So few of us are happy."

He saw the tears spring to her eyes. "If she could only learn to love me," he thought. "We are congenial; she seemed never to weary of me. Why should I be too proud to risk a refusal?"

One desperate moment of hesitation and he heard himself saying, "You will not be angry with me? I cannot go away, there's no use in trying, until I have told you all about it. I love you, Portia. My whole life is yours."

"Me!" she exclaimed, starting up. "After all that has passed?"

"I know what you mean. I used to say I could not love a woman who had ever loved or been engaged to another man; that she would be spoiled for me; I must be the very first. I was a fool, then. I am no longer that egotist. I did not intend to tell you this. I would not have dared to ask you deliberately to be my wife, after all the shameful suspicion and outrage which have left their ill odor on my name, but I could not help it. Marry me, Portia! Go with me across the seas!"

"Oh! I am very, very sorry to hear you say this," returned Portia reproachfully. "It is a mistake you have made. Some day you will really love, and then you will see! I know — I believe you mean it all; but it is a mistake. Good-by! You know we have always been such good friends. You must forget all this — you will when you

have found the real one, and you will wonder at your blindness."

Mallory stood speechless; then he aroused himself to say "I am not mistaken. I never loved before, I can never love again. But it shall be as you wish. Good-by!"

They shook hands warmly, tenderly, and this time Portia did not laugh at the absurd sentimental mistakes of men who, Corinne had taught her, did not know when they were in love, and especially did not know when they were not.

Mallory found himself, to his disgust, shivering in the mild June breeze he encountered on the streets of New York. A brave figure he would make on board an ocean steamer. He intended to go up to Boston and make a parting call on Allerton, but an inexplicable weariness and apathy kept him wandering aimlessly about the well-remembered streets and parks which, ages ago, it seemed, he had traversed with his lively school comrades. At last even this feeble desire failed.

One day a physician said to Allerton, "There is an acquaintance of yours quite ill at the Vendome, from the South. His name is Mallory. Quite good-looking, if he only had another eye."

"Mallory!" exclaimed Allerton eagerly. "What has brought him here; did he say?"

"No; he's too ill. I asked him if he knew you, and he said he did. He's a very sick man."

"Tell me one thing: that eye — is it an artificial one?"

The physician looked at him keenly. "No; but he can't see a wink out of it."

Allerton gave a sigh of relief. "I must go and see him."

"Try and get him away from that hotel. He refuses to go to a hospital."

"Southerners have a prejudice against hospitals. I'll take him home with me if he will let me."

"The quiet of a private house will be much better for him. I am not sure he's going to get well. I think the proprietor would be glad to have him removed; the guests are afraid of Southern fevers."

"Southern fiddlesticks! They don't have any more fevers down there than they do here, and not as many."

Allerton lost no time in calling a family council to inquire if there were any objections to his having Mallory and his nurse in the spare room until he should recover sufficient strength to take himself away, which he assured them would occur immediately on his regaining power of locomotion.

His mother adjusted her eyeglasses and looked at him very gravely. "Haven't you done enough for him yet? You were not to blame for his losing that eye." George looked at his mother fixedly, and a faint tremor crossed her face. "He was kind to you once, I know. Well, then, we'll not

let these high-headed Southerners outdo us in generosity. But I shall be very much afraid of him and your father away for the first time in thirty years."

"I may not be able to persuade him to come at all. Kentuckians are very much afraid of obligations. But he may be too ill to care."

"Why need he bring a nurse?" inquired Bertha. "Couldn't we take care of him?"

"He would not understand it. He is accustomed to receiving such services only from servants. He would not like it."

"Very well," submitted Bertha, smiling, "though it might be wholesome discipline to be snubbed by a howler from the headwaters of Bitter Creek. At least, I can read Sunday school stories to him?"

"Bertha, you don't know what smooth-tongued flatterers these Southerners are. They have inherited it, and they have been trained to it from their cradles up. You would feel its effect more than you think."

"What an absurd brother! How long is it since you warned me against the fatal fascinations of the courtly Prince Irwin? And Flushing, weren't you sure I should never be able to withstand the charms of your fastidious little friend? And now I'm in imminent peril from the insidious attractions of a fox-hunting cavalier from the Blue Grass Pastures of Kentucky. What sort of impressionable material do you think I am made of?"

"That you have remained thus far wholly insensible to masculine attractions is due only to the fact that you have not met the right one," said her brother, laughing, though rather reservedly.

Bertha opened her blue eyes in a wide look of surprise. "George, have you worried all these years so needlessly — and still not convinced!"

"Very well, then, be as kind to him as you like. He needs it, doubtless."

Mallory did not object to Allerton's disposal of him; he seemed strangely indifferent to his surroundings. His nurse was a young medical student, who was away a good deal of the time, leaving Mallory alone. But it seemed to make no difference to him whether he had company or not.

He was too passive, the physician said. He seemed not to care whether he lived or died. "There's no earthly reason why he shouldn't get well if he wanted to," he complained. "Miss Bertha, I hope you will not visit your prejudice against rebels too heavily on this poor fellow. You could interest him in getting well if you wanted to."

Bertha had not made herself free and friendly in this sick-room as was her custom. She had only given him his medicine a few times when the nurse was out. But now she followed her brother into Mallory's room.

He lay, dull-eyed and silent, while Allerton took

his unresponsive hand in his own. "Is there no one you would like me to write to for you, Mallory?" he inquired, sitting down on the side of his bed.

"No, thank you, Allerton," he murmured.

"Your sister, Mrs. Winchester, wouldn't she like to hear from you?"

"My sister is dead. She died during that trial. It — it hastened her death." And he turned his face to the wall.

The brother and sister exchanged compassionate glances. They returned to the library together. "We must try and make him feel that he is among friends who want him to get well," George said. "No wonder he is depressed and discouraged; alone and helpless in a world of strangers. Put on that lovely pink dress and go offer to read him something — something bright and interesting. Perhaps he will listen to a chapter of the Bible after awhile. He isn't a Christian. There is a chance to do a little missionary work."

"Why change my dress? He never looks at me."

"Very well; but try and make him look at you. It might help him. You are worth looking at, Bertha."

"I know it! I know it! But I could freeze the very marrow in his bones if I chose."

"Don't do it, Bertha."

"Take care! Have you lost all consideration

for your susceptible sister? And then, he might fall in love with me.".

"Well, let him. It will be better than dying."

"Remember, it will be all your fault," with a warning glance over her shoulder as she left the room.

But her countenance as she neared the sick room changed. Limp and purposeless as he had seemed whenever she had seen him, she had felt the charm of his clear, strong face, of the large dark eyes never lifted to her face.

She seated herself on a low chair within easy range of his glance, so that if he looked anywhere, he must see her. "I am going to read to you awhile," she announced, smiling faintly as his somber eyes met hers for the first time, "if it will not disturb you. You can listen, or you can go to sleep, you know."

He did not reply at once, and then he spoke with evident effort: "Thank you."

She read in a soft, clear tone, "The Building of the Ship," and when at the conclusion she looked up, it was with an expression of surprise, which broke into a pleased smile. He was asleep.

The next day at about the same hour she came in again with the same quiet announcement: she was going to read to him, and he could go to sleep or stay awake as he preferred.

"What is it?" he questioned languidly.

"'A Prose Henriade.' About hens and chickens

and butterflies and caterpillars. If you don't smell the apple-blossoms and hear the chickens cheep, it's because you have no love of Nature in your soul, or because you've gone to sleep."

She read the first chapter through, then looked up and met his eyes fixed on her rather wistfully.

"You are not asleep!" she exclaimed brightly. "How do you like Hallicarnassus?"

"Oh! I know him of old," he said. "This is not my first acquaintance with him. But he's not a representative Yankee, nor a Yankee at all. He's Southern."

"It is true," she returned musingly, "I have never met him. But I do not disclaim him as a representative Puritan. And if you find him Southern, that shows how near akin we are."

She smiled so joyously that a faint answering beam crept over his face.

After that she read to him every day, and sat with him when Carter was away. His physician ceased to complain of a lack of interest in getting well. Bertha understood the poetry of nursing. She glided in and out with cheering words and pleasant smiles, and her soft flowing drapery made no *frou-frou* as she walked. There were always books and papers to read, new subjects to discuss, fresh thoughts to communicate — thoughts of unselfish living, of peaceful, hopeful dying; and gradually the heaviness vanished from his looks, his lips responded more and more readily to her smiles.

Apparently, being coddled and made much of did not spoil him.

Occasionally Mrs. Allerton dropped in with a rather nervous, uncertain air. She could not help feeling that her coming let in upon the balmy atmosphere a chilling, inharmonious element. She could not shut her eyes to the fact that these two young people seemed to get on marvelously well together. At first Bertha used to repeat all their conversations, but lately she had shown a strange reserve on the subject. Was she falling in love with the man; or had she discovered that he was in love with her? These questions were too delicate, too dangerously suggestive, especially if there should chance to be really nothing between them, for Mrs. Allerton to venture upon. But in the meantime she worried miserably over it, and wished in her heart he had never been brought into their house.

One day as she moved restlessly about the room — she had never felt at home in this sick room — he said: "Mrs. Allerton, will you be so kind as to come and sit by me a minute? I would like to speak with you."

Bertha had left the room. Mrs. Allerton, with startled eyes and a face whose rigid pallor was anything but propitious, complied with his request.

"Mrs. Allerton, I feel that I have no right to stay another hour in your house without letting you know that I love your daughter. You will

be grieved, I fear, but I could not help it; and if you will give me leave to win her, I think, if she is willing, you will find me a — a not uncomfortable sort of son-in-law." He was propped up with pillows, and there was a flush on his cheeks that looked like health. There was nothing in his easy tone indicative of effort.

Mrs. Allerton sat down. "You have said nothing to her?" she asked in a cold monotone.

"Not a word. I believe — I hope, at least, that I could make her like me, but you have been so kind I would not try until I knew how you would feel about it."

"It seems very strange. She does not know you. Does my son know of this?"

"He knows, and is willing to leave it all to his sister. He knows my circumstances and something of my character and disposition. He is willing to trust his sister's happiness to my keeping."

"I must think it over," rising with recovered calmness. "Thank you for speaking to me first. You will say nothing to her until I have given you my decision?"

"My dear Mrs. Allerton, you will not make me wait too long? But of course I will have some regard for your wishes, else why should I have asked your consent? I love her inexpressibly. She is so beautiful, so noble; she has shown me what life means. I was like one who sat in dark-

ness. She drew aside the curtain, and I saw the beginning of the kingdom of heaven within — here, on this earth. Even if I never see her again — but I must! I will not think of life without her. I could make her happy, I know."

"I must write to my husband. I must see what he thinks."

"Your son has written. He did not tell you; he thought I had better do that. Mr. Allerton has implicit faith in his daughter's judgment."

"After all, Bertha may not care for you. How can she, on so short an acquaintance?"

At the door she almost ran against Bertha, who was coming back, but who now turned and gazed after her mother with a serious, meditative gaze.

As soon as her eyes fell on Mallory's face Bertha knew what had happened. "He is going to leave," she thought, with a throb of pain. "She has forbidden him to speak, and he finds that hard. He finds it hard to leave. I will make it impossible."

She sat down and read to him for half an hour. She read with her profile toward him; a profile which, in its noble simplicity of outline, would not have looked out of place on a Greek coin. But as she closed the book she turned and faced him. His sombre eyes had no answering smile as she went on in her brightest way to speak of the book she had been reading.

"Miss Bertha, may I write to you when I go away? There is something I wish to say to you.

I don't know what you think of me, but I wish to believe that you like me well enough to answer if I write to you" — He checked himself suddenly. His voice had a certain intensity in it, and his brilliant dark eyes said a good deal more than they had any right to say.

Bertha listened very quietly, and when he paused she lifted her eyes and met his for a moment. "You are not going soon?"

"Yes; I am strong enough to stand hotel life now, thanks to your kindness. Your brother has selected a quiet little home-like hotel, and I go there to-morrow, too deeply in your debt to have any hope of ever repaying you." He paused, and with evident effort turned his eyes away.

Bertha turned the leaves of her book mechanically. "It has been a pleasure to us," she said simply. "You have helped to rid us of many absurd prejudices and false ideas of the South, and to show us that, after all, we are all of the same blood, the same people and country." She, too, ceased suddenly, and her eyes had such inexpressible sadness in them that he came near losing his self-command, and then and there pouring forth all the passionate love and misery that filled his soul.

Fortunately his physician entered in time to prevent such a catastrophe. As she left the room Bertha heard him saying, "You have been talking too much; pulse much quicker and fever higher. You must take better care of yourself, young man;

a relapse now might keep you in bed another month."

"Mother," said Bertha, a few minutes afterward, "Mr. Mallory is going back to the hotel to-morrow, and the doctor says he is worse. I could not ask him to stay, but I wish you would. He was getting on so nicely here."

"I don't want him to stay," said her mother coldly.

"Mother! The war is over; didn't you know that?"

"What do we know about him that is not to his disadvantage?"

"I know a good deal about him. I know of no Bostonian who is brighter, more refined, or more conscientious. All the difference I can see is that he pronounces aunt ant, and we pronounce it ont."

"Tell me, Bertha," placing her arms affectionately around her daughter, and speaking in a tone of entreaty, "you don't care anything about this man?"

Bertha drew away and fixed a searching gaze on her mother. "What do you mean, mother? What have you been saying to Mr. Mallory?"

"I believe he thinks you care for him."

"You have hurt his feelings, mother; that is why he is going away."

"I wish he had never come," exclaimed Mrs. Allerton, with a look of distress.

"I do not," and Bertha, leaning against the

mantel, looked down at her mother with a smile that went no farther than her lips, and left her eyes profoundly sad.

Mrs. Allerton had never seen that intense look on her daughter's face before, and determined not to see it now. "He will go away without a word, and this sudden fancy will as suddenly pass away," she thought. "It will be as if he had never come — as I would to Heaven he never had!"

That evening Mallory made a full confession to George of his mistaken fancy in regard to Portia, and of her strange instinctive recognition of it. "Heaven knows how she knew, but I feel the difference now. When she insisted on its being all a mistake, I thought myself sorely misused. You have no idea how broken up I felt."

"Yes, I have," said Allerton.

"When she persisted in saying that I did not know my own mind, I was so angry that I wanted to die. I really hoped I should; it would have been such a cutting revenge."

But Allerton was not listening. He had gone to the window, and was muttering indistinctly, the purport of which Mallory caught only in fragments: "She must have loved that fraud, after all, — that whited sepulchre, that idiot!"

"Allerton, you are hard on me!" wailed the sick man. "Have you never made a mistake? You are all hard on me."

"Heaven knows I have!" cried Allerton, returning to his former position by the bedside, and holding out his hand. "Here is my hand and my best wishes for your success."

"Then say a word to your mother in my behalf," Mallory entreated. "She is all against me."

"Bertha is the one to bring mother around."

"But I have promised to say nothing without her permission."

"Then you'll never say it."

"Tell your mother, then, that I shall speak to Bertha as soon as I am out of this house. I shall not leave the city until I have told her all. Why is your mother so against me?"

"For many reasons. Women usually have stronger prejudices than men. Their lives are narrower; they cut deeper; and it is harder for them to get out of the ruts. But once you win mother's confidence you will find her a strong friend."

The following morning, when Bertha entered the library from the breakfast-room, she was startled to find Mallory sitting there in his ordinary dress, bright-eyed and smiling, but deadly pale. "Now this is all wrong," she cried.

"I am going away," he said quietly. "The carriage will be here soon. Will you drive with me an hour or two to-morrow afternoon?"

"You are not strong enough for that," looking at him reproachfully.

"Nothing will help me so much, if you will go, too," he insisted earnestly. "Will you go?"

"Yes; if you are sure I shall not bore you."

The others came in. The carriage was at the door, and Mallory made his adieus with something of his old grace and unaffected ardor, expressing his heart-felt appreciation of their kindness in simple, unpretentious words.

Bertha stood at the window smiling and waving her hand as the carriage drove away. She still stood there, some minutes afterward, smiling in dreamy abstraction, as if she still saw him. She did not know her mother was in the room until she turned and saw her there close beside her, searching her countenance with an expression of pained anxiety.

"Mother," passing her arms caressingly around her mother's neck, "that is your future son-in-law. Love him for my sake if not for his own. He is going to ask me to be his wife to-morrow, and I am going to say Yes."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ON THE HUDSON.

As Portia stood on the railway platform making her final adieus to her mother and Blanche, she was unexpectedly accosted by Mr. Crugar, who offered the pleasure of his society as far as Louisville. He had a valise in one hand, and a cane under his arm; and as Mrs. Ingram hastened to signify her approval, he took charge of Portia's hand-bag also, and they entered the car together.

Portia looked out upon the dear, vanishing faces with a brave smile, and repressing her sorrow, politely turned her attention to the lively chit-chat of her companion.

He was going to Louisville on "business," the mysterious importance of which he only vaguely outlined; for Crugar always founded his fiction on fact. He enlarged and embellished the various other business transactions of his chequered career into schemes of vast proportions: told how near he had come several times to drawing a fortune in the Louisiana Lottery, and how determined he

was to have it yet. Said he was going to Washington before long to prosecute a claim he had against the Government, that would be worth a cool million, at least, and so on.

It was plain enough that life, to Mr. Crugar, meant money; the lack of it, or of the ability to obtain it, the uttermost depths of degradation.

When he had made his monetary importance plain, he began to relate his numerous personal adventures and hair-breadth escapes.

"I suppose you heard all about the time the Bumpus train came near running over me, heavily loaded with whiskey?" he said, in the course of his autobiography.

"How did that happen?" she inquired, with mild interest.

"Did Allerton never tell you about the time he found me asleep on the track and a loaded car coming?"

"I don't remember. Why were you there?"

"Well, you see I had a bet with the boys, and lost, and the consequence was, treats all round, and all of us a little out of gear," he confessed, with engaging candor. "I had lain down across the track for a little nap. Allerton happened to come along just in time, and dragged me into a fence corner. Ruined a new hundred and fifty dollah suit and got my hair full o' burs."

There was a short silence. Then Portia said, "He might have taken you home, I think."

"Well, no, I don't know as I blame him for that," said Crugar generously. "You see we were at outs — fact is, I had two pistols in my pocket then, intending to make him fight a duel. I preferred short-swords — beautiful exercise! Never saw it, did you? — but Allerton didn't know a short from a broad-sword, and there was nothing left but pistols; beastly weapon! but a little better than a club" —

"You intended to kill him?" with a look of horror.

"Why, no. That is, I didn't intend to kill him. I had made up my mind to put a hole through his right ear, and as I've picked out a squirrel's eye at two hundred yards, it isn't hardly likely I'd have missed. But accidents will happen sometimes, you know, to the best of marksmen."

"And did he know about it?"

"Certainly."

"And was going to fight with you?"

"Of course. That is, he tried to get out of it, at first. But Allerton's no coward, if he is a Yankee, and he'd have come to it finally. I have an idea he gave Mallory a good beating once."

"Oh! what strange, inhuman, blood-thirsty creatures men are. Now you are sorry you didn't manage to put a hole through his ear or hack him with your sword." And she fell to wondering in her heart to what uses God would put such souls in Eternity.

Mr. Crugar discreetly changed the subject.

But Portia's imagination was kindled and her thoughts kept running on that singular incident. How generous of him never to have mentioned it! This was the man whose love she had put aside as a slight and common thing; the man whom she admired and esteemed next to her father; and she had put him out of her life forever!

At Louisville, Portia and Mr. Crugar separated with mutual satisfaction. He had never been the ardent admirer of Portia and her ways that some were; he considered her far inferior to Corinne in beauty, and to Blanche in wit. And Portia had failed to find the interest in Crugar's autobiography that he did, and was glad to be left alone to settle her accounts with the past, and to arrange for better terms with the future.

Her future! What was it to be? She had been trained to nothing except the feeling that a woman trying to earn money was a pitiable figure. Allerton had shown her the dignity and real content of a self-supporting life, and the beauty of self-effacing service.

She had made it plain to her aunt that she meant to prepare herself, as speedily as possible, for some field of usefulness, and her aunt had signified her approval and proffered her help in the matter. But they differed in regard to the method.

Portia wished to be a trained nurse, while Mrs. Carew who had heard of Portia's various and ex-

traordinary talents from Mrs. Ingram, wished her to be an artist or an author. "Be sure and bring your manuscript, and all your drawings," she had written. "We will see what can be done."

At half-past nine, the third night, Portia found herself dismounting from her car at Jersey City. As the passengers all hastened on the ferry-boat, Portia, after a bewildered glance around, followed. "What is the fare on this boat?" she inquired of the man beside her, who yawned comfortably, as if secure of himself and all his surroundings.

"Nothing," he answered with a look of surprise.

"My aunt was to send some one to meet me," she added, searching the crowd with anxious eyes. She looked everywhere except close beside her.

"Portia!"

She started violently, and looked at the man on the other side of her, who was laughing.

"Mr. Allerton!" For a moment she was speechless; as if scarcely accrediting her own eyes; then began to beam in glad relief. "How did you know I was coming?"

"A little fairy whispered it," he answered with a delighted smile. Her presence there beside him filled him with a supreme and luxurious sense of satisfaction. "A little freckled, red-haired fairy."

"Blanche — the traitor! She never breathed a word of it to me —" a slight blush betraying an embarrassing conjecture at Blanche's possible motive. "I was looking for a footman in gray livery."

"Won't I do as I well?" He had taken her books and travelling bag, and was offering his arm. It did not occur to her to notice that here the very apostle and avant-courier of feminine independence was burdening himself with all her responsibilities and belongings, as if he had been the very flower of Southern chivalry. "Here is the carriage, all ready and waiting, and you can see the coachman in gray; we didn't bring any footman. What do you think of a twelve-mile drive to-night? It is a lovely evening, and if you are not too tired, I think it would be delightful. I am going with you out to your aunt's. She said if you preferred to remain at a hotel to-night, we could come out in the morning. But I felt sure you would prefer the drive."

"Yes, I do, very much. Do you know my aunt?"

"I formed her acquaintance this very day. She is a delightful woman, and we are fast friends. She has invited me to spend a week with her during the summer."

"Have you seen or heard anything of Mr. Mallory? He was to have sailed for Europe more than a month ago, and no one has heard a word from him."

"I have seen Mr. Mallory — yes. In fact," with a quick, keen glance, "I see him every day. He is engaged to my sister. I think he has deferred his trip to Europe until next season."

"Mr. Allerton! Are you joking?"

"Why? Do you object?"

"Object! I am delighted, of course; you know that. But your family — How did it all come about?"

There was plenty of time during that enchanting moonlight drive to tell her all about it. "Father came home in the midst of it," he added in conclusion, "and was so favorably impressed with his prospective son-in-law that even mother begins to feel rather proud of him."

It was midnight when they arrived at their destination, but the house was ablaze with light, and Aunt Eleanor — a graceful figure in gray — stood on the piazza to receive her charge.

"You are very much like your father," said her aunt, a few minutes afterward, as Portia stood under the chandelier, pulling off her gloves.

"Am I?" said Portia, with her eyes fixed thoughtfully on her aunt. "So are you, Aunt Eleanor."

"Then we must be something alike," said the elder lady.

They had a little "spread" in the dining-room, and talked a great deal, Aunt Eleanor seeming scarcely less young and enthusiastic than the others. Portia could not refrain from smiling at the easy friendliness that had sprung up between these two, and the quiet, matter-of-fact way in which Allerton made himself at home in her aunt's house.

He could not be induced to remain all night, however. He had engaged a room at the village hotel, and next morning took the early train for New York.

The first weeks of Portia's life on the Hudson were given over to the matter of dress. It soon began to seem a serious matter, the sort of clothes one wore. But at last the wearisome days of shopping, the trying on and putting off, the standing for hours to be "fitted," all came to an end; and when Portia inspected the stylish New York girl in the glass, she could scarcely convince herself that it was Portia Ingram.

At last her aunt bethought her of the manuscript she had requested Portia to bring, and inquired if she had obeyed her.

Portia reluctantly admitted that she had.

"Let me see it? Why don't you have it published?"

"Mr. Allerton did not think any publisher would want it."

Aunt Eleanor read a few paragraphs here and there. "I don't see but it's as good as the most of them," she said. "If the publishers are afraid of it, we can publish it ourselves. A great many authors have begun that way, you know. Even publishers are not always infallible."

"Will you be willing to pay selleridge and all, Aunt?" inquired Portia, beginning to laugh.

"Selleridge?"

"Have you never read Coleridge's anecdote of the old clergyman's theological work and its bill for selleridge?"

"I don't remember it."

"'How moderate for selling a thousand volumes,' the old gentleman said when the bill was handed him. 'But none of them have been sold,' said the agent. 'This bill is for their occupancy of the warehouse cellar, where they now await your orders.'"

Aunt Eleanor refused to be laughed out of her plan for making her niece a famous author; but when two or three publishers declined to assume the responsibility of its publication, Portia persuaded her that they probably knew more about the book market than she, and that it would be foolish to waste money on a book which no one would buy.

"You see, Aunt, though I may have even a brighter or possibly a better-balanced mind than many a successful writer, my gifts do not run into 'thoughts that breathe and words that burn.' I felt the stirrings of unemployed mental faculties, and I wanted to make some money, and so I wrote. But I like talking better than writing, and doing still better than either. You have no idea the amount of seclusion, of study and preoccupation, I found necessary to write even that one little worthless book. Writers have to sacrifice everything to their work. They must work like slaves;

not to obtain thought, that must spring spontaneous; but to arrange, condense, smooth down into thorough, perfect, marketable shape. And one cannot have his pudding and eat it, too; cannot throw his whole soul into a book and still have it fresh and bright for other things."

The failure of her literary scheme did not serve to reconcile Mrs. Carew to the idea of her niece's being a professional nurse. And in deference to her wishes Portia began to dabble in oil paints, though not without a protest.

"What good will these third-rate pictures do when I have finished them?" she inquired ironically. "The thoroughly-trained, competent nurse brings peace and comfort to a suffering world. It is a noble life; a thousand-fold more beautiful in all its tedious and often-times unattractive detail than playing at art or authorship. If I were your nephew instead of your niece, and wished to study medicine, would you discourage me so? Yet many women have proven that the highest distinction is as attainable to the nurse as to the physician."

Allerton came frequently, and at length accepted Aunt Eleanor's repeated invitation to spend a week with them. It was quite like old times. There were no lessons, but they spent a good deal of time sketching around and about over the lawn. They kept together, and did a good deal of talking.

"Are you really going to give up The Oaks, at last?" she inquired of him one day, as they sat

underneath a spreading elm sketching a neighboring duck pond.

"I haven't fully made up my mind about that," he returned cautiously. "I suppose I ought to go back."

"You certainly ought," said Portia emphatically; "and that at once."

"And you just come! Portia, you are cruel."

"Cruel?" She saw in a fleeting glance that his hand trembled so he could hardly paint the ducks on the pond. "Is it cruel to insist on your holding fast to an estate of six hundred acres — your only chance, so far as I can see, of a congenial, independent living?"

Portia detected the pretense in his glance of speechless indignation, and went on in the superior tone she had lately assumed to admonish him upon his lack of enterprise and business thrift.

"O, come!" he said at length. "Haven't you scolded enough? Put down your brushes and things, I want to talk with you."

"You needn't sit so near," returned Portia, edging away with a trepidation she evidently wished to disguise as a fitting indignation. "The people at the house will know what you are saying."

"But I haven't said anything yet," suggested Allerton, with a laugh.

Portia was not alert in the art of self-defense. She could only pretend to ignore him and concentrate her whole attention upon her colors.

"You blushed then," he continued with quiet triumph. "You will never become the hard and callous creature you admire. You are of an affectionate nature, though you are ashamed of it and would like to deny it. Few find any high degree of happiness in walking solitary through life, even though they feel that God commends them and all their ways. They must see his approval reflected in tender human eyes, feel it in the pressure of loving hands and arms and lips. I know I used to think, and try to make you think, that love was a useless luxury; that a life of courage and heroism and difficult attainment must of a necessity be solitary. But a change has taken place. I find it terrible to live alone. I want you, Portia, to love, to work for and with, and to love me. And I shall keep on wanting you all my life."

"I can't paint when you talk like that!" cried Portia, throwing down her brushes.

"I don't want you to paint," said Allerton, reaching for one of the slippery hands. "I should be sorry if you could. I can't and I don't want you to be superior to me in anything. Isn't that the creed of your Southern chivalry? You need not say you can't love me; it would not be true. You never really loved Prince Irwin; it was only fancy. I believe now, with all my soul, Portia, that you loved me all along better than you have ever loved any one, though you did not know it."

Portia looked at him in astonishment, for she

recognized in his words the truth, unsuspected until that moment.

As she sat there staring at him with meditative eyes, she became suddenly conscious of an element of triumph in his beaming smile. A sudden wave of color swept over her countenance and she hastily answered, "But I do not love you now."

"But you will," he rejoined. "Let me teach you. Only say that I may try; that is all I ask."

"I am fickle," she declared warningly. "As fickle as the wind."

"I will take the risk."

"Come, let go my hand. The people at the house" —

"Not until you have answered me. I don't care for the people at the house."

"Haven't I answered you? What else do you want me to say?"

His smile expanded. "Say — 'Dear George, I am yours till death.' That will be sufficient, I think."

"O, indeed! I dare say," withdrawing her hand.

"I love you, Portia, and you love me. What was love made for but for marriage and happiness? And here you would be turning it into longing and grieving. When shall we be married, Portia?"

"Will you wait a year?" cautiously.

"A year! Look at the top of my head," taking off his hat. "I am growing bald with much wait-

ing. Do you want to see me old and faded and gray before my time?"

"You look on the verge of the grave now, I must say! I never saw you looking better."

"That is because you are here. But I have just emerged from the pit of despair. Oh! do not drive me back into that abomination of desolation, Portia, heavier than physical punishment to endure. I could die for you far easier than I could live without you."

"Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and it seemed but a few days because of the love he bore her. There are no such lovers these days."

"Oh! if we had some half-dozen centuries to dawdle away, doubtless we would be glad enough to spend a cycle or so in courtship; especially if we could have Rachel in the same house, and bask in her smiles unreproved by our own consciences or any one's else."

"But I know so little of housekeeping, of domestic economy, or any of the arts and sciences so necessary to — to the wife of a reformer. I was not preparing for any such place of honor. I" —

"Portia, look at me and tell me — did Prince Irwin have to beg you so long before you would give him an answer?"

Portia felt the reproach of his words, though there was none in his tone. He was not jealous of Prince Irwin. He knew, even better than Portia did, how much she loved him.

"And he kissed you a number of times!"

"But I never kissed him."

"Will you kiss me?"

Portia glanced uneasily toward the house. All the windows seemed staring at her in shocked disapproval. "Would you be very much disappointed if I should refuse?"

"Unbearably!" moving a good deal nearer.

"You must come over behind the lilac bushes, then. I won't have them all laughing at me at the house."

"Anywhere, so that you kiss me."

In the friendly shade of the lilac bushes Allerton took matters into his own hands. He knew quite well that Aunt Eleanor was coming up the walk on the other side, but it made no difference to him. The world might be coming, for aught he cared.

"I thought that would be the way the professional nursery business would end," said Aunt Eleanor, with an approving smile. "When is the wedding to be?"

"I don't know, I am sure," faltered Portia, blushing violently, while Allerton, to conceal his laughter, hurried away and began collecting their scattered property.

"Next week, if it is convenient to you," he replied, returning with the things and a tolerably serious countenance.

Portia laughed him to scorn, and even Mrs.

Carew said that a bride's trousseau was not a trifle to be disposed of in a few days, or a few weeks even. When Allerton urged that he might forfeit the Pinkney estate if he staid away too long, Portia said, "You have never heard who would receive it in that case?"

"No; I have no idea. Have you?"

"Yes."

"Who is it?"

"Myself."

"You, Portia! You amaze me. And you knew this all the time?"

"Certainly."

"Why did you wish me to have it?"

"I knew that you could do so much more good with it. And papa said that, too. Besides, Col. Pinkney wanted you to have it. He always said that Northern and Southern people ought to know more of each other: that we need more of their enterprise, fertility of resource and tact, while they might be improved by seeing a little more of the friendly, open-hearted, unconventional South."

"Your father always seemed to shun the subject; and once when I suggested a division, he opposed the idea so firmly that I thought it must be some one he disliked. Well, it is yours now, after all."

Portia made an important discovery in the three months preceding her marriage. It had seriously disturbed her to observe how few writers, especially

masculine writers, would tolerate a plain heroine. She saw now that a woman beloved is always a beauty to her lover; or, if not actually a beauty, a genius or a miracle of some sort. She was convinced that a woman did not really have to be beautiful to appear so in her lover's eyes.

Women were not so blind, she was sure. She was entirely satisfied in her own mind that there really had never been a handsomer or more attractive man than this lover of hers; and that no one could think of denying either his extraordinary physical beauty or his remarkable intellectual gifts.

When Allerton brought Portia back to her native pastures he found that the seed he had sown there in bitterness of soul had taken firm, steadfast root. The public library was not only growing, but the people were eagerly reading the books. Even some of the truculent "high-spirited poah white trash" were beginning to widen their horizon with the higher thoughts and broader experiences of other people.

The Temperance Society was now fairly underway, with Judge Pirtle in the lead. The fact that Claxton had joined, and bade fare to make a consistent member, had brought the movement into immediate popularity. Allerton ensured his permanence by putting upon him the watch-care of others worse than himself. He had discovered that the responsibility of another's rescue is a

stronger incentive to faithfulness than even one's own salvation: the slippery feet that could not make the ascent alone, acquiring new strength and firmness in another's behalf.

The colored school was now an established fact. Arrangements had already been made for building a commodious schoolhouse on the outskirts of the village, in the colored quarter.

You should see Athens now! Once the spirit of reform had taken hold on them, these people had as little thought of refusing whatever help they could obtain from Allerton, as the South had of rejecting the cotton-gin because a Yankee had invented it.

It is needless to say that Portia and Bertha made most congenial sisters-in-law. Bertha readily adapted herself to her surroundings, and soon began to make a definite impression on crude thought and provincial taste, wherever such were to be found, and she discovered less in Athens than in many a New England village she had visited in her previous summer wanderings.

For awhile Allerton and Mallory had their seasons of shyness and reserve, when the Ghost of the Past rose up between them and held them asunder. It is not always easy to forget, even when we have thoroughly forgiven. At last, Allerton, breaking forcibly through the restraint that had fallen upon them, exclaimed: "Mallory,

if you only knew how much I suffer daily on account of that eye of yours! I would gladly give one of my own to replace it, for I do truly love you, Mallory. Do you believe it?"

Mallory looked at him an instant with grave attention, then admitted that he did believe him.

"And yet, under this ever-present irremedial affliction you must find it hard to forgive. I fear, at times, you must almost hate me, Mallory!"

It was impossible that Mallory's generous nature should remain untouched by this. "Do I look as if I hated you?" he exclaimed. "I thought you knew me better, Allerton. Take this hand, will you, and tell me what you feel in it? Is it reluctance? is it coldness? is it slack indifference? No, you cold-blooded, Pharisaical, psalm-singing Puritan! It is a thing that is rare in this vain and artificial world: it is true Friendship!"

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GLADYS: A ROMANCE. By Mary Greenleaf Darling. Boston: D. Lothrop Company. Price $1.50. This work of fiction from the pen of a new author is not only of a high literary standard, but it is pure and wholesome and full of passages that show the author to have thought deeply and considered seriously concerning certain social matters. The main action of the story takes place in Boston, the home of the heroine, Gladys Amory, although incidental chapters are laid at Bar Harbor, and also at Memphis, during the terrible yellow fever year of 1878. The story — which has a very strong local flavor, abounding as it does with references to well-known Boston names and localities — is intense in its interest, and the writer shows a power that promises even better work in the future.

PATIENCE PRESTON, M. D. By Mrs. A. F. Raffensperger. 12mo, $1.25. An excellent story fairly well told, with a moral all through it. The moral is: first it pays to be earnest, intelligent, scholarly; second the religious life is a higher accomplishment still.

A bright and true young woman, with a medical degree, and money enough to give her a start apparently, by a rather taxing accident settles down in a little city and gets at first the easiest kind of practice — that of the poor — for experience. She conquers society and society conquers her. The mutual victory brings good fortune to both.

The reader alternately sides with Patience and those of the other party, so evenly is the web of the story woven. And, when the end comes, it comes without surprise; and yet the sympathetic reader is pleased that it ends just so.

HERBERT GARDENELL'S CHILDREN. By Mrs. S. R. Graham Clark. Boston: D. Lothrop Company. Price $1.50. A new book by the author of *Yensie Walton* and *The Triple E* is an event in Sunday-school literature. No writer knows better than Mrs. Clark how to awaken the interest and enlist the sympathies of young readers. Her books are powerful agencies in the household for shaping the mind and character and deserve a prominent place in every Sunday-school library in the land. Herbert Gardenell is a clergyman with five children, one of whom, Olive, a nine-year-old girl, fills a large place in the book. She is a bright, active child, full of life and fun, strong in her likes and dislikes, affectionate, yet willful and outspoken, unlike any of the rest, and yet the favorite of them all. Herbert and Ray, the older brothers, are also prominent in the story, and the author gives us a series of charming pictures of life in the Gardenell household. But there never was a home where it was always sunshine, and a shadow fell upon that of the Gardenells, which, though not lasting, was for many months a source of the keenest pain. It brought no disgrace, however, and when the clouds at last cleared away, they left a feeling of peace and trust in the household that it had never known before even in its happiest days. The story is Mrs. Clark's best.

MARGARET REGIS; and Some Other Girls. By Annie H. Ryder. Boston: D. Lothrop Company. Price $1.25. A multitude of readers all over the country know the author of this capital story through her last year's book, which made such a success, *Hold Up Your Heads, Girls!* Although wholly different in plan — though not in purpose — "Margaret Regis" is every bit as strong a book, and to some will be even more attractive. Margaret Regis is one of a group of merry students at an institute for young ladies, bright, healthy, active, and with a never-failing fund of good nature and good spirits. We are introduced to her on the eve of her graduation, when she and her companions are getting all the enjoyment they can out of the few remaining days. She says: "Get the joy, get the gladness out of your young lives whenever you can; get it, and let it make a bright light along your path through all the way of life. Be girls; happy, joyous girls always, if you can. Do not let persons or circumstances prevent your gladness, if duty does not. Make a duty of happiness, and a happiness of duty. When the years of womanhood are full may they find you as cheery and hopeful and reliant as you are now, whatever may fall to your lot." From school we follow Margaret Regis abroad, where she goes to prepare herself for her life work — that of a teacher — and then back again to Boston, and out into the country where she begins her labors. How her plans fall through, after a brief experience, and how she makes an engagement to teach one grown-up pupil for life, instead of a room full of little ones for half a dozen terms, readers must find out for themselves from the book itself.

THE CRIME AGAINST IRELAND. 12mo, cloth 60 cents; paper 25 cents. Boston: D. Lothrop Company, Publishers.

"The Crime against Ireland" is the title which Mrs. J. Ellen Foster gives to her collected letters from Ireland to the Boston *Journal*, just published in book form, with a preface by John Boyle O'Reilly, by D. Lothrop Company of Boston. One of the strongest proofs of the intrinsic justice of the Irish cause, and of the importance to all humanity of its triumph, is in the fact that it is constantly winning its warmest advocates among other nationalities. Take for example, in America, James Redpath, the late D. R. Locke, and Mrs. Foster — all of whom at the outset were filled with strong, inherited prejudice against all things Irish. Mrs. Foster studied the Irish question on Irish soil. She witnessed for herself the workings of the Coercion Act. We have never seen, within so brief a compass, a clearer and more forcible presentation of the land question, England's destruction of Irish manufactures, and, in short, every one of the multiplied Irish grievances, for one and all of which there is no remedy save through Irish legislative independence, than is given by Mrs. Foster in "The Crime Against Ireland." We heartily commend this book, which is destined to do a great work for Ireland and for humanity in helping to complete the education of the American people on the Irish question.

A MIDSHIPMAN AT LARGE. By Charles R. Talbot. Boston: D. Lothrop Company. Price $1.50. Mr. Charles Remington Talbot is the author of half a dozen books for boys, which have attained a wide popularity and which have not only the merit of being bright and interesting, but thoroughly wholesome. The two "Royal Lowrie" volumes and the capital story of "Honor Bright" deserve a place in every boy's library, and to them may now be added "A Midshipman at Large." What a midshipman at large is, very few young readers will know until they read the opening chapter of the book. A midshipman is a naval cadet, or a student at the United States Naval Academy, and is nominated from a particular district by a member of Congress. A midshipman at large, instead of obtaining admission to the Academy in this manner, is appointed directly by the President. During the four years of his course he is allowed but one vacation, which comes generally at the close of the second year. It consists of forty days' leave, and one can well imagine what a season of freedom and enjoyment those forty days must be to the healthy young fellows who for so many months have been kept as closely to the limits of the school ground as a State convict to the bounds of the prison where he is confined. The midshipman at large who is the hero of the present story is Flagler Hamlyn, and the time covered is the period of his forty days' vacation. He comes to Newport to visit an uncle and cousins whom he has not seen for a number of years, and a freak takes possession of him to present himself to them under a different name. His experiences as Thomas Flagg are very entertaining and will be thoroughly enjoyed by boys and girls alike. The story is capitally illustrated.

THE HEREAFTER. Twenty-three Answers by so Many Religious Teachers to the Question, "What are the strongest proofs and arguments in support of the belief in a life hereafter?" Boston: D. Lothrop Co. Price 60 cents; paper 25 cents.

The series of articles published in the Christmas number of the Boston Herald in answer to the question, "What are the strongest proofs and arguments in support of the belief in a life hereafter?" re-appears in a little volume bearing the imprint of D. Lothrop Company. The contributors to the series include representative preachers and teachers of nearly every religious denomination in the country, and what they have to say from their individual standpoints upon the subject is of remarkable interest. Each writer puts into a nutshell his individual opinion or creed and the grounds upon which it is based. No sectarian argument or coloring is admitted, and the twenty-three papers given are admirable specimens of how much can be said in few words. The writers include such men as James Freeman Clarke, Joseph Cook, Dr. Bartol, Rabbi Schindler, Julian K. Smyth, Brooke Hereford, Henry W. Foote and others.

ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON; and KENSINGTON JUNIOR. By Margaret Sidney. Ill. Boston: D. Lothrop Company. Price $1.00. Here are two capital boys' stories by one who knows boys and their ways. The first has for its hero a bright impulsive lad who has a good many dragons to fight before he gets a firm grip of the world, but who meets them so bravely and combats them so sturdily that from threatening monsters they sink into insignificance. "Kensington Junior" has two or three characters about equally prominent. Its main interest, however, revolves about a young man who has been detected in a burglary to which he has been driven by want, but who is trying to lead a better life. He starts a drawing-school under the auspices of one or two families that are interested in him, and innocently makes an enemy of one of his pupils, who attempts to break up the school and drive him away. Of course he does not succeed, but the author gives an intensely interesting account of his attempts and their failure.

THE DOCTOR OF DEANE. By Mary T. Palmer. Boston: D. Lothrop Company. Price $1.25. "The Doctor of Deane" is a charming picture of village life in which all the strokes tell. The characters though few are exceptionally well drawn, and there is unusual skill and power shown in the analysis of different temperaments. Dr. West is a young physician of refined tastes who has a growing pratice in the village of Deane. A man of strong character and high purpose, he has found his happiness in his profession and in the society of his mother, who is a woman of rare qualities. But this state of things cannot last with a young man of impressionable nature. In one of his professional visits he incidentally meets a beautiful, refined young girl, the daughter of wealthy but uncultivated people, who devotes much of her leisure to charitable work. The doctor is charmed by her beauty and gentleness, and a warm friendship springs up between them, though he more and more recognizes the limitations of her nature, which could never develop the best that is in him. She on her part is conscious of no lack of interest in him, and learns to love him with all her heart, though no words but those of friendship have passed between them. She rejects the rector, who has long cherished a strong affection for her, and he sees with jealous eyes the hold that Dr. West has unwittingly obtained over the one person whom he believed specially designed for himself. Later on Dr. West meets another young girl, the only child of a doting father, beautiful also in a different way, gifted, and abounding with life and susceptibility. In her he comes to find his true soul-mate. But before he can make his happiness secure, a complication arises. The struggle to conceal what she realizes is a hopeless love, results in a long and nearly fatal illness for the beautiful girl who first attracted his attention, and for a time her reason is in danger. Throughout this illness, Dr. West, conscious of having been in a measure the accidental cause, watches over the patient with unceasing devotion, and it is his persisent care and skill that finally restore her to mental and physical health, with mind enlarged and heart purified by suffering.

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